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THE
COLLECTED
WORKS
of
Nikolay Gogol

translated by
Constance Garnett

ALFRED · A · KNOPF
New York



THE
OVERCOAT

and Other Stories

by

Nikolay Gogol

ALFRED · A · KNOPF

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CONTENTS

THE OVERCOAT	11
THE CARRIAGE	57
THE NEVSKY PROSPECT	77
A MADMAN'S DIARY	127
THE PRISONER	159
THE NOSE	169
THE PORTRAIT	207

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IN 1828, at the age of nineteen, Gogol, who had till then lived only in the Ukraine, left school and, like Tyentyetnikov in *Dead Souls*, went to Petersburg with his head full of dreams of serving the cause of humanity by entering the government service. At first he failed to obtain even the humblest berth in any department and was in extremely straitened circumstances, so much so that we find him writing to a friend that he had gone through the Petersburg winter (1829-1830) with only a thin summer overcoat.

Though full of confidence in his own powers and his future success, he seems to have been uncertain in what direction to turn his energies. He had some talent as an artist, and attended art classes with the idea of becoming a painter. He was a gifted comic actor and made an unsuccessful attempt to get on the stage.

In 1829 he published an idyll in verse, *Hans Kochelgarten*, probably written before he left the South, and was so distressed at the criticism it received that he collected all the copies, burnt them, and, although he had very little knowledge of any foreign language and hardly any money, decided to leave Russia and go abroad. As soon as the steamer began to move into the open sea, he regretted this hasty decision, and on reaching Lübeck took the next boat back to Petersburg.

When at last he got a petty clerkship in some gov-

ernment office, he found the service very different from his idealistic dreams and distasteful in every way.

These depressing conditions threw him back upon the past, and he began writing the stories of Ukrainian life afterwards published as *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*. Some of these were accepted by magazines and attracted the notice of literary men, through whom he was in 1831 introduced to Pushkin.

This meeting was not only the most important event in Gogol's life, but was of the greatest significance in the development of Russian literature.

Pushkin had reached the stage of discarding the romanticism of his youth and was beginning to write in a realistic style absolutely new in Russia. He recognized at once the originality and talent of Gogol's Ukrainian sketches, urged him to publish them in book form, and did everything he could to widen his outlook and stimulate him to write. The years 1831 to 1836, the period during which Gogol was in close personal relations with Pushkin and completely under his influence, include practically the whole of his creative activity. It was during those happy years that he wrote all the stories contained in this volume as well as his two surviving plays, and began *Dead Souls*, the subject of which was suggested by Pushkin.

In 1836, disappointed at the reception of his play, *The Inspector-General*, he left Russia and settled in Rome, to which he was attracted by his interest in painting and pictures.

THE OVERCOAT

THE OVERCOAT

I N the department of . . . but I had better not mention in what department. There is nothing in the world more readily moved to wrath than a department, a regiment, a government office, and in fact any sort of official body. Nowadays every private individual considers all society insulted in his person. I have been told that very lately a petition was handed in from a police-captain of what town I don't recollect, and that in this petition he set forth clearly that the institutions of the State were in danger and that its sacred name was being taken in vain; and, in proof thereof, he appended to his petition an enormously long volume of some work of romance in which a police-captain appeared on every tenth page, occasionally, indeed, in an intoxicated condition. And so, to avoid any unpleasantness, we had better call the department of which we are speaking a certain department.

And so, in a certain department there was a government clerk; a clerk of whom it cannot be said that he was very remarkable; he was short, somewhat pock-marked, with rather reddish hair and rather dim, bleary eyes, with a small bald patch on the top of his head, with wrinkles on both sides of his cheeks and the sort of complexion which is usually associated with hæmorrhoids . . . no help for that, it is the Petersburg climate. As for his grade in the service (for among

THE OVERCOAT

us the grade is what must be put first), he was what is called a perpetual titular councillor, a class at which, as we all know, various writers who indulge in the praiseworthy habit of attacking those who cannot defend themselves jeer and jibe to their hearts' content. This clerk's surname was Bashmatchkin. From the very name it is clear that it must have been derived from a shoe (*bashmak*); but when and under what circumstances it was derived from a shoe, it is impossible to say. Both his father and his grandfather and even his brother-in-law, and all the Bashmatchkins without exception wore boots, which they simply re-soled two or three times a year. His name was Akaky Akakievitch. Perhaps it may strike the reader as a rather strange and far-fetched name, but I can assure him that it was not far-fetched at all, that the circumstances were such that it was quite out of the question to give him any other name. Akaky Akakievitch was born towards nightfall, if my memory does not deceive me, on the twenty-third of March. His mother, the wife of a government clerk, a very good woman, made arrangements in due course to christen the child. She was still lying in bed, facing the door, while on her right hand stood the godfather, an excellent man called Ivan Ivanovitch Yeroshkin, one of the head clerks in the Senate, and the godmother, the wife of a police official, and a woman of rare qualities, Arina Semyonovna Byelobryushkov. Three names were offered to the happy mother for selection—Moky, Sossy, or the name of the martyr Hozdazat. "No," thought the poor lady, "they are all such names!" To satisfy her, they opened the calendar at another place, and the names which turned up were: Trifily, Dula, Vara-

THE OVERCOAT

hasy. "What an infliction!" said the mother. "What names they all are! I really never heard such names. Varadat or Varuh would be bad enough, but Trifily and Varahasy!" They turned over another page and the names were: Pavsikahy and Vahtisy. "Well, I see," said the mother, "it is clear that it is his fate. Since that is how it is, he had better be called after his father, his father is Akaky, let the son be Akaky, too." This was how he came to be Akaky Akakyevitch. The baby was christened and cried and made wry faces during the ceremony, as though he foresaw that he would be a titular councillor. So that was how it all came to pass. We have recalled it here so that the reader may see for himself that it happened quite inevitably and that to give him any other name was out of the question. No one has been able to remember when and how long ago he entered the department, nor who gave him the job. However many directors and higher officials of all sorts came and went, he was always seen in the same place, in the same position, at the very same duty, precisely the same copying clerk, so that they used to declare that he must have been born a copying clerk in uniform all complete and with a bald patch on his head. No respect at all was shown him in the department. The porters, far from getting up from their seats when he came in, took no more notice of him than if a simple fly had flown across the vestibule. His superiors treated him with a sort of domineering chilliness. The head clerk's assistant used to throw papers under his nose without even saying: "Copy this" or "Here is an interesting, nice little case" or some agreeable remark of the sort, as is usually done in well-behaved offices. And he

THE OVERCOAT

would take it, gazing only at the paper without looking to see who had put it there and whether he had the right to do so; he would take it and at once set to work to copy it. The young clerks jeered and made jokes at him to the best of their clerkly wit, and told before his face all sorts of stories of their own invention about him; they would say of his landlady, an old woman of seventy, that she beat him, would enquire when the wedding was to take place, and would scatter bits of paper on his head, calling them snow. Akaky Akakyevitch never answered a word, however, but behaved as though there were no one there. It had no influence on his work even; in the midst of all this teasing, he never made a single mistake in his copying. Only when the jokes were too unbearable, when they jolted his arm and prevented him from going on with his work, he would bring out: "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" and there was something strange in the words and in the voice in which they were uttered. There was a note in it of something that aroused compassion, so that one young man, new to the office, who, following the example of the rest, had allowed himself to mock at him, suddenly stopped as though cut to the heart, and from that time forth, everything was, as it were, changed and appeared in a different light to him. Some unnatural force seemed to thrust him away from the companions with whom he had become acquainted, accepting them as well-bred, polished people. And long afterwards, at moments of the greatest gaiety, the figure of the humble little clerk with a bald patch on his head rose before him with his heart-rending words: "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" and in those heart-rending words he

THE OVERCOAT

heard others: "I am your brother." And the poor young man hid his face in his hands, and many times afterwards in his life he shuddered, seeing how much inhumanity there is in man, how much savage brutality lies hidden under refined, cultured politeness, and, my God! even in a man whom the world accepts as a gentleman and a man of honour. . . .

It would be hard to find a man who lived in his work as did Akaky Akakyevitch. To say that he was zealous in his work is not enough; no, he loved his work. In it, in that copying, he found a varied and agreeable world of his own. There was a look of enjoyment on his face; certain letters were favourites with him, and when he came to them he was delighted; he chuckled to himself and winked and moved his lips, so that it seemed as though every letter his pen was forming could be read in his face. If rewards had been given according to the measure of zeal in the service, he might to his amazement have even found himself a civil councillor; but all he gained in the service, as the wits, his fellow-clerks expressed it, was a buckle in his button-hole and a pain in his back. It cannot be said, however, that no notice had ever been taken of him. One director, being a good-natured man and anxious to reward him for his long service, sent him something a little more important than his ordinary copying; he was instructed from a finished document to make some sort of report for another office; the work consisted only of altering the headings and in places changing the first person into the third. This cost him such an effort that it threw him into a regular perspiration: he mopped his brow and said at last, "No, better let me copy something."

THE OVERCOAT

From that time forth they left him to go on copying for ever. It seemed as though nothing in the world existed for him outside his copying. He gave no thought at all to his clothes; his uniform was—well, not green but some sort of rusty, muddy colour. His collar was very short and narrow, so that, although his neck was not particularly long, yet, standing out of the collar, it looked as immensely long as those of the plaster kittens that wag their heads and are carried about on trays on the heads of dozens of foreigners living in Russia. And there were always things sticking to his uniform, either bits of hay or threads; moreover, he had a special art of passing under a window at the very moment when various rubbish was being flung out into the street, and so was continually carrying off bits of melon rind and similar litter on his hat. He had never once in his life noticed what was being done and going on in the street, all those things at which, as we all know, his colleagues, the young clerks, always stare, carrying their sharp sight so far even as to notice any one on the other side of the pavement with a trouser strap hanging loose—a detail which always calls forth a sly grin. Whatever Akaky Akakyevitch looked at, he saw nothing anywhere but his clear, evenly written lines, and only perhaps when a horse's head suddenly appeared from nowhere just on his shoulder, and its nostrils blew a perfect gale upon his cheek, did he notice that he was not in the middle of his writing, but rather in the middle of the street.

On reaching home, he would sit down at once to the table, hurriedly sup his soup and eat a piece of beef with an onion; he did not notice the taste at all, but

THE OVERCOAT

ate it all up together with the flies and anything else that Providence chanced to send him. When he felt that his stomach was beginning to be full, he would rise up from the table, get out a bottle of ink and set to copying the papers he had brought home with him. When he had none to do, he would make a copy expressly for his own pleasure, particularly if the document were remarkable not for the beauty of its style but for the fact of its being addressed to some new or important personage.

Even at those hours when the grey Petersburg sky is completely overcast and the whole population of clerks have dined and eaten their fill, each as best he can, according to the salary he receives and his personal tastes; when they are all resting after the scratching of pens and bustle of the office, their own necessary work and other people's, and all the tasks that an over-zealous man voluntarily sets himself even beyond what is necessary; when the clerks are hastening to devote what is left of their time to pleasure; some more enterprising are flying to the theatre, others to the street to spend their leisure, staring at women's hats, some to spend the evening paying compliments to some attractive girl, the star of a little official circle, while some—and this is the most frequent of all—go simply to a fellow-clerk's flat on the third or fourth storey, two little rooms with an entry or a kitchen, with some pretensions to style, with a lamp or some such article that has cost many sacrifices of dinners and excursions—at the time when all the clerks are scattered about the little flats of their friends, playing a tempestuous game of whist, sipping tea out of glasses to the accompaniment of farthing rusks, sucking in

THE OVERCOAT

smoke from long pipes, telling, as the cards are dealt, some scandal that has floated down from higher circles, a pleasure which the Russian can never by any possibility deny himself, or, when there is nothing better to talk about, repeating the everlasting anecdote of the commanding officer who was told that the tail had been cut off the horse on the Falconet monument—in short, even when every one was eagerly seeking entertainment, Akaky Akakievitch did not give himself up to any amusement. No one could say that they had ever seen him at an evening party. After working to his heart's content, he would go to bed, smiling at the thought of the next day and wondering what God would send him to copy. So flowed on the peaceful life of a man who knew how to be content with his fate on a salary of four hundred roubles, and so perhaps it would have flowed on to extreme old age, had it not been for the various calamities that bestrew the path through life, not only of titular, but even of privy, actual court and all other councillors, even those who neither give council to others nor accept it themselves.

There is in Petersburg a mighty foe of all who receive a salary of four hundred roubles or about that sum. That foe is none other than our northern frost, although it is said to be very good for the health. Between eight and nine in the morning, precisely at the hour when the streets are full of clerks going to their departments, the frost begins giving such sharp and stinging flips at all their noses indiscriminately that the poor fellows don't know what to do with them. At that time, when even those in the higher grade have a pain in their brows and tears in their eyes from the

THE OVERCOAT

frost, the poor titular councillors are sometimes almost defenceless. Their only protection lies in running as fast as they can through five or six streets in a wretched, thin little overcoat and then warming their feet thoroughly in the porter's room, till all their faculties and qualifications for their various duties thaw again after being frozen on the way. Akaky Akakievitch had for some time been feeling that his back and shoulders were particularly nipped by the cold, although he did try to run the regular distance as fast as he could. He wondered at last whether there were any defects in his overcoat. After examining it thoroughly in the privacy of his home, he discovered that in two or three places, to wit on the back and the shoulders, it had become a regular sieve; the cloth was so worn that you could see through it and the lining was coming out. I must observe that Akaky Akakievitch's overcoat had also served as a butt for the jibes of the clerks. It had even been deprived of the honourable name of overcoat and had been referred to as the "dressing jacket." It was indeed of rather a strange make. Its collar had been growing smaller year by year as it served to patch the other parts. The patches were not good specimens of the tailor's art, and they certainly looked clumsy and ugly. On seeing what was wrong, Akaky Akakievitch decided that he would have to take the overcoat to Petrovitch, a tailor who lived on a fourth storey up a back staircase, and, in spite of having only one eye and being pock-marked all over his face, was rather successful in repairing the trousers and coats of clerks and others—that is, when he was sober, be it understood, and had no other enterprise in his mind. Of this tailor I ought

THE OVERCOAT

not, of course, to say much, but since it is now the rule that the character of every person in a novel must be completely drawn, well, there is no help for it, here is Petrovitch too. At first he was called simply Grigory, and was a serf belonging to some gentleman or other. He began to be called Petrovitch from the time that he got his freedom and began to drink rather heavily on every holiday, at first only on the chief holidays, but afterwards on all church holidays indiscriminately, wherever there is a cross in the calendar. On that side he was true to the customs of his forefathers, and when he quarrelled with his wife used to call her "a worldly woman and a German." Since we have now mentioned the wife, it will be necessary to say a few words about her too, but unfortunately not much is known about her, except indeed that Petrovitch had a wife and that she wore a cap and not a kerchief, but apparently she could not boast of beauty; anyway, none but soldiers of the Guards peeped under her cap when they met her, and they twitched their moustaches and gave vent to a rather peculiar sound.

As he climbed the stairs, leading to Petrovitch's—which, to do them justice, were all soaked with water and slops and saturated through and through with that smell of spirits which makes the eyes smart, and is, as we all know, inseparable from the back-stairs of Petersburg houses—Akaky Akakyevitch was already wondering how much Petrovitch would ask for the job, and inwardly resolving not to give more than two roubles. The door was open, for Petrovitch's wife was frying some fish and had so filled the kitchen with smoke that you could not even see the black-beetles.

THE OVERCOAT

Akaky Akakyevitch crossed the kitchen unnoticed by the good woman, and walked at last into a room where he saw Petrovitch sitting on a big, wooden, unpainted table with his legs tucked under him like a Turkish Pasha. The feet, as is usual with tailors when they sit at work, were bare; and the first object that caught Akaky Akakyevitch's eye was the big toe, with which he was already familiar, with a misshapen nail as thick and strong as the shell of a tortoise. Round Petrovitch's neck hung a skein of silk and another of thread and on his knees was a rag of some sort. He had for the last three minutes been trying to thread his needle, but could not get the thread into the eye and so was very angry with the darkness and indeed with the thread itself, muttering in an undertone: "It won't go in, the savage! You wear me out, you rascal." Akaky Akakyevitch was vexed that he had come just at the minute when Petrovitch was in a bad humour; he liked to give him an order when he was a little "elevated," or, as his wife expressed it, "had fortified himself with fizz, the one-eyed devil." In such circumstances Petrovitch was as a rule very ready to give way and agree, and invariably bowed and thanked him, indeed. Afterwards, it is true, his wife would come wailing that her husband had been drunk and so had asked too little, but adding a single ten-kopeck piece would settle that. But on this occasion Petrovitch was apparently sober and consequently curt, unwilling to bargain, and the devil knows what price he would be ready to lay on. Akaky Akakyevitch perceived this, and was, as the saying is, beating a retreat, but things had gone too far, for Petrovitch was screwing up his solitary eye very attentively at

THE OVERCOAT

him and Akaky Akakyeitch involuntarily brought out: "Good day, Petrovitch!" "I wish you a good day, sir," said Petrovitch, and squinted at Akaky Akakyeitch's hands, trying to discover what sort of goods he had brought.

"Here I have come to you, Petrovitch, do you see . . . !"

It must be noticed that Akaky Akakyeitch for the most part explained himself by apologies, vague phrases, and particles which have absolutely no significance whatever. If the subject were a very difficult one, it was his habit indeed to leave his sentences quite unfinished, so that very often after a sentence had begun with the words, "It really is, don't you know . . ." nothing at all would follow and he himself would be quite oblivious, supposing he had said all that was necessary.

"What is it?" said Petrovitch, and at the same time with his solitary eye he scrutinised his whole uniform from the collar to the sleeves, the back, the skirts, the button-holes—with all of which he was very familiar, they were all his own work. Such scrutiny is habitual with tailors, it is the first thing they do on meeting one.

"It's like this, Petrovitch . . . the overcoat, the cloth . . . you see everywhere else it is quite strong; it's a little dusty and looks as though it were old, but it is new and it is only in one place just a little . . . on the back, and just a little worn on one shoulder and on this shoulder, too, a little . . . do you see? that's all, and it's not much work. . . ."

Petrovitch took the "dressing jacket," first spread it out over the table, examined it for a long time, shook

THE OVERCOAT

his head and put his hand out to the window for a round snuff-box with a portrait on the lid of some general—which precisely I can't say, for a finger had been thrust through the spot where a face should have been, and the hole had been pasted up with a square bit of paper. After taking a pinch of snuff, Petrovitch held the "dressing jacket" up in his hands and looked at it against the light, and again he shook his head; then he turned it with the lining upwards and once more shook his head; again he took off the lid with the general pasted up with paper and stuffed a pinch into his nose, shut the box, put it away and at last said: "No, it can't be repaired; a wretched garment!" Akaky Akakyeitch's heart sank at those words.

"Why can't it, Petrovitch?" he said, almost in the imploring voice of a child. "Why, the only thing is it is a bit worn on the shoulders; why, you have got some little pieces. . . ."

"Yes, the pieces will be found all right," said Petrovitch, "but it can't be patched, the stuff is quite rotten; if you put a needle in it, it would give way."

"Let it give way, but you just put a patch on it."

"There is nothing to put a patch on. There is nothing for it to hold on to; there is a great strain on it, it is not worth calling cloth, it would fly away at a breath of wind."

"Well, then, strengthen it with something—upon my word, really, this is . . . !

"No," said Petrovitch resolutely, "there is nothing to be done, the thing is no good at all. You had far better, when the cold winter weather comes, make yourself leg wrappings out of it, for there is no warmth in stockings, the Germans invented them just to make

THE OVERCOAT

money." (Petrovitch was fond of a dig at the Germans occasionally.) "And as for the overcoat, it is clear that you will have to have a new one."

At the word "new" there was a mist before Akaky Akakyevitch's eyes, and everything in the room seemed blurred. He could see nothing clearly but the general with the piece of paper over his face on the lid of Petrovitch's snuff-box.

"A new one?" he said, still feeling as though he were in a dream; "why, I haven't the money for it."

"Yes, a new one," Petrovitch repeated with barbarous composure.

"Well, and if I did have a new one, how much would it . . . ?"

"You mean what will it cost?"

"Yes."

"Well, three fifty-rouble notes or more," said Petrovitch, and he compressed his lips significantly. He was very fond of making an effect, he was fond of suddenly disconcerting a man completely and then squinting sideways to see what sort of a face he made.

"A hundred and fifty roubles for an overcoat," screamed poor Akaky Akakyevitch—it was perhaps the first time he had screamed in his life, for he was always distinguished by the softness of his voice.

"Yes," said Petrovitch, "and even then it's according to the coat. If I were to put marten on the collar, and add a hood with silk linings, it would come to two hundred."

"Petrovitch, please," said Akaky Akakyevitch in an imploring voice, not hearing and not trying to hear what Petrovitch said, and missing all his effects, "do repair it somehow, so that it will serve a little longer."

THE OVERCOAT

"No, that would be wasting work and spending money for nothing," said Petrovitch, and after that Akaky Akakyeitch went away completely crushed, and when he had gone Petrovitch remained standing for a long time with his lips pursed up significantly before he took up his work again, feeling pleased that he had not demeaned himself nor lowered the dignity of the tailor's art.

When he got into the street, Akaky Akakyeitch was as though in a dream. "So that is how it is," he said to himself. "I really did not think it would be so . . ." and then after a pause he added, "So there it is! so that's how it is at last! and I really could never have supposed it would have been so. And there . . ." There followed another long silence, after which he brought out: "So there it is! well, it really is so utterly unexpected . . . who would have thought . . . what a circumstance. . . ." Saying this, instead of going home he walked off in quite the opposite direction without suspecting what he was doing. On the way a clumsy sweep brushed the whole of his sooty side against him and blackened all his shoulder; a regular hatful of plaster scattered upon him from the top of a house that was being built. He noticed nothing of this, and only after he had jostled against a sentry who had set his halberd down beside him and was shaking some snuff out of his horn into his rough fist, he came to himself a little and then only because the sentry said: "Why are you poking yourself right in one's face, haven't you the pavement to yourself?" This made him look round and turn homeward; only there he began to collect his thoughts, to see his position in a clear and true light and began talking to himself no longer incoherently

THE OVERCOAT

but reasonably and openly as with a sensible friend with whom one can discuss the most intimate and vital matters. "No, indeed," said Akaky Akakyeveitch, "it is no use talking to Petrovitch now; just now he really is . . . his wife must have been giving it to him. I had better go to him on Sunday morning; after the Saturday evening he will be squinting and sleepy, so he'll want a little drink to carry it off and his wife won't give him a penny. I'll slip ten kopecks into his hand and then he will be more accommodating and maybe take the overcoat. . . ."

So reasoning with himself, Akaky Akakyeveitch cheered up and waited until the next Sunday; then, seeing from a distance Petrovitch's wife leaving the house, he went straight in. Petrovitch certainly was very tipsy after the Saturday. He could hardly hold his head up and was very drowsy: but, for all that, as soon as he heard what he was speaking about, it seemed as though the devil had nudged him. "I can't," he said, "you must kindly order a new one." Akaky Akakyeveitch at once slipped a ten-kopeck piece into his hand. "I thank you, sir, I will have just a drop to your health, but don't trouble yourself about the overcoat; it is not a bit of good for anything. I'll make you a fine new coat, you can trust me for that."

Akaky Akakyeveitch would have said more about repairs, but Petrovitch, without listening, said: "A new one now I'll make you without fail; you can rely upon that, I'll do my best. It could even be like the fashion that has come in with the collar to button with silver claws under appliqué."

Then Akaky Akakyeveitch saw that there was no escape from a new overcoat and he was utterly depressed,

THE OVERCOAT

How indeed, for what, with what money could he get it? Of course he could to some extent rely on the bonus for the coming holiday, but that money had long ago been appropriated and its use determined beforehand. It was needed for new trousers and to pay the cobbler an old debt for putting some new tops to some old boot-legs, and he had to order three shirts from a seamstress as well as two specimens of an undergarment which it is improper to mention in print; in short, all that money absolutely must be spent, and even if the director were to be so gracious as to assign him a gratuity of forty-five or even fifty, instead of forty roubles, there would be still left a mere trifle, which would be but as a drop in the ocean beside the fortune needed for an overcoat. Though, of course, he knew that Petrovitch had a strange craze for suddenly putting on the devil knows what enormous price, so that at times his own wife could not help crying out: "Why, you are out of your wits, you idiot! Another time he'll undertake a job for nothing, and here the devil has bewitched him to ask more than he is worth himself." Though, of course, he knew that Petrovitch would undertake to make it for eighty roubles, still where would he get those eighty roubles? He might manage half of that sum; half of it could be found, perhaps even a little more; but where could he get the other half? . . . But, first of all, the reader ought to know where that first half was to be found. Akaky Akakyevitch had the habit every time he spent a rouble of putting aside two kopecks in a little locked-up box with a slit in the lid for slipping the money in. At the end of every half-year he would inspect the pile of coppers there and change them for small silver. He

THE OVERCOAT

had done this for a long time, and in the course of many years the sum had mounted up to forty roubles and so he had half the money in his hands, but where was he to get the other half, where was he to get another forty roubles? Akaky Akakyevitch pondered and pondered and decided at last that he would have to diminish his ordinary expenses, at least for a year; give up burning candles in the evening, and if he had to do anything he must go into the landlady's room and work by her candle; that as he walked along the streets he must walk as lightly and carefully as possible, almost on tiptoe, on the cobbles and flagstones, so that his soles might last a little longer than usual; that he must send his linen to the wash less frequently, and that, to preserve it from being worn, he must take it off every day when he came home and sit in a thin cotton-shoddy dressing-gown, a very ancient garment which Time itself had spared. To tell the truth, he found it at first rather hard to get used to these privations, but after a while it became a habit and went smoothly enough—he even became quite accustomed to being hungry in the evening; on the other hand, he had spiritual nourishment, for he carried ever in his thoughts the idea of his future overcoat. His whole existence had in a sense become fuller, as though he had married, as though some other person were present with him, as though he were no longer alone, but an agreeable companion had consented to walk the path of life hand in hand with him, and that companion was no other than the new overcoat with its thick wadding and its strong, durable lining. He became, as it were, more alive, even more strong-willed, like a man who has set before himself a definite aim. Uncertainty, in-

THE OVERCOAT

decision, in fact all the hesitating and vague characteristics vanished from his face and his manners. At times there was a gleam in his eyes, indeed, the most bold and audacious ideas flashed through his mind. Why not really have marten on the collar? Meditation on the subject always made him absent-minded. On one occasion when he was copying a document, he very nearly made a mistake, so that he almost cried out "ough" aloud and crossed himself. At least once every month he went to Petrovitch to talk about the overcoat, where it would be best to buy the cloth, and what colour it should be, and what price, and, though he returned home a little anxious, he was always pleased at the thought that at last the time was at hand when everything would be bought and the overcoat would be made. Things moved even faster than he had anticipated. Contrary to all expectations, the director bestowed on Akaky Akakyevitch a gratuity of no less than sixty roubles. Whether it was that he had an inkling that Akaky Akakyevitch needed a greatcoat, or whether it happened so by chance, owing to this he found he had twenty roubles extra. This circumstance hastened the course of affairs. Another two or three months of partial fasting and Akaky Akakyevitch had actually saved up nearly eighty roubles. His heart, as a rule very tranquil, began to throb. The very first day he set off in company with Petrovitch to the shops. They bought some very good cloth, and no wonder, since they had been thinking of it for more than six months before, and scarcely a month had passed without their going to the shop to compare prices; now Petrovitch himself declared that there was no better cloth to be had. For

THE OVERCOAT

the lining they chose calico, but of a stout quality, which in Petrovitch's words was even better than silk, and actually as strong and handsome to look at. Marten they did not buy, because it certainly was dear, but instead they chose cat fur, the best to be found in the shop—cat which in the distance might almost be taken for marten. Petrovitch was busy over the coat for a whole fortnight, because there were a great many button-holes, otherwise it would have been ready sooner. Petrovitch asked twelve roubles for the work; less than that it hardly could have been, everything was sewn with silk, with fine double seams, and Petrovitch went over every seam afterwards with his own teeth imprinting various figures with them. It was . . . it is hard to say precisely on what day, but probably on the most triumphant day of the life of Akaky Akakievitch that Petrovitch at last brought the overcoat. He brought it in the morning, just before it was time to set off for the department. The overcoat could not have arrived more in the nick of time, for rather sharp frosts were just beginning and seemed threatening to be even more severe. Petrovitch brought the greatcoat himself as a good tailor should. There was an expression of importance on his face, such as Akaky Akakievitch had never seen there before. He seemed fully conscious of having completed a work of no little moment and of having shown in his own person the gulf that separates tailors who only put in linings and do repairs from those who make up new materials. He took the greatcoat out of the pocket-handkerchief in which he had brought it (the pocket-handkerchief had just come home from the wash), he then folded

THE OVERCOAT

it up and put it in his pocket for future use. After taking out the overcoat, he looked at it with much pride and, holding it in both hands, threw it very deftly over Akaky Akakyevitch's shoulders, then pulled it down and smoothed it out behind with his hands; then draped it about Akaky Akakyevitch with somewhat jaunty carelessness. The latter, as a man advanced in years, wished to try it with his arms in the sleeves. Petrovitch helped him to put it on, and it appeared that it looked splendid too with his arms in the sleeves. In fact it turned out that the overcoat was completely and entirely successful. Petrovitch did not let slip the occasion for observing that it was only because he lived in a small street and had no sign-board, and because he had known Akaky Akakyevitch so long, that he had done it so cheaply, but on the Nevsky Prospect they would have asked him seventy-five roubles for the work alone. Akaky Akakyevitch had no inclination to discuss this with Petrovitch, besides he was frightened of the big sums that Petrovitch was fond of flinging airily about in conversation. He paid him, thanked him, and went off on the spot, with his new overcoat on, to the department. Petrovitch followed him out and stopped in the street, staring for a good time at the coat from a distance and then purposely turned off and, taking a short cut by a side street, came back into the street and got another view of the coat from the other side, that is, from the front.

Meanwhile Akaky Akakyevitch walked along with every emotion in its most holiday mood. He felt every second that he had a new overcoat on his shoulders, and several times he actually laughed from

THE OVERCOAT

inward satisfaction. Indeed, it had two advantages, one that it was warm and the other that it was good. He did not notice the way at all and found himself all at once at the department; in the porter's room he took off the overcoat, looked it over and put it in the porter's special care. I cannot tell how it happened, but all at once every one in the department learned that Akaky Akakyeveitch had a new overcoat and that the "dressing jacket" no longer existed. They all ran out at once into the porter's room to look at Akaky Akakyeveitch's new overcoat, they began welcoming him and congratulating him so that at first he could do nothing but smile and afterwards felt positively abashed. When, coming up to him, they all began saying that he must "sprinkle" the new overcoat and that he ought at least to stand them all a supper, Akaky Akakyeveitch lost his head completely and did not know what to do, how to get out of it, nor what to answer. A few minutes later, flushing crimson, he even began assuring them with great simplicity that it was not a new overcoat at all, that it was just nothing, that it was an old overcoat. At last one of the clerks, indeed the assistant of the head clerk of the room, probably in order to show that he was not proud and was able to get on with those beneath him, said: "So be it, I'll give a party instead of Akaky Akakyeveitch and invite you all to tea with me this evening; as luck would have it, it is my name-day." The clerks naturally congratulated the assistant head clerk and eagerly accepted the invitation. Akaky Akakyeveitch was beginning to make excuses, but they all declared that it was uncivil of him, that it was simply a shame and a disgrace and that he

THE OVERCOAT

could not possibly refuse. However, he felt pleased about it afterwards when he remembered that through this he would have the opportunity of going out in the evening, too, in his new overcoat. That whole day was for Akaky Akakyevitch the most triumphant and festive day in his life. He returned home in the happiest frame of mind, took off the overcoat and hung it carefully on the wall, admiring the cloth and lining once more, and then pulled out his old "dressing jacket," now completely coming to pieces, on purpose to compare them. He glanced at it and positively laughed, the difference was so immense! And long afterwards he went on laughing at dinner, as the position in which the "dressing jacket" was placed recurred to his mind. He dined in excellent spirits and after dinner wrote nothing, no papers at all, but just took his ease for a little while on his bed, till it got dark, then, without putting things off, he dressed, put on his overcoat, and went out into the street. Where precisely the clerk who had invited him lived we regret to say that we cannot tell; our memory is beginning to fail sadly, and everything there is in Petersburg, all the streets and houses, are so blurred and muddled in our head that it is a very difficult business to put anything in orderly fashion. However that may have been, there is no doubt that the clerk lived in the better part of the town and consequently a very long distance from Akaky Akakyevitch. At first the latter had to walk through deserted streets, scantily lighted, but as he approached his destination the streets became more lively, more full of people, and more brightly lighted; passers-by began to be more frequent, ladies began to appear, here and there, beauti-

THE OVERCOAT

fully dressed, beaver collars were to be seen on the men. Cabmen with wooden trellis-work sledges, studded with gilt nails, were less frequently to be met; on the other hand, jaunty drivers in raspberry coloured velvet caps with varnished sledges and bearskin rugs appeared, and carriages with decorated boxes dashed along the streets, their wheels crunching through the snow.

Akaky Akakyeitch looked at all this as a novelty; for several years he had not gone out into the streets in the evening. He stopped with curiosity before a lighted shop-window to look at a picture in which a beautiful woman was represented in the act of taking off her shoe and displaying as she did so the whole of a very shapely leg, while behind her back a gentleman with whiskers and a handsome imperial on his chin was putting his head in at the door. Akaky Akakyeitch shook his head and smiled and then went on his way. Why did he smile? Was it because he had come across something quite unfamiliar to him, though every man retains some instinctive feeling on the subject, or was it that he reflected, like many other clerks, as follows: "Well, upon my soul, those Frenchmen! it's beyond anything! if they try on anything of the sort, it really is . . . !" Though possibly he did not even think that; there is no creeping into a man's soul and finding out all that he thinks. At last he reached the house in which the assistant head clerk lived in fine style; there was a lamp burning on the stairs, and the flat was on the second floor. As he went into the entry Akaky Akakyeitch saw whole rows of goloshes. Amongst them in the middle of the room stood a samovar hissing and letting off

THE OVERCOAT

clouds of steam. On the walls hung coats and cloaks, among which some actually had beaver collars or velvet revers. The other side of the wall there was noise and talk, which suddenly became clear and loud when the door opened and the footman came out with a tray full of empty glasses, a jug of cream, and a basket of biscuits. It was evident that the clerks had arrived long before and had already drunk their first glass of tea. Akaky Akakievitch, after hanging up his coat with his own hands, went into the room, and at the same moment there flashed before his eyes a vision of candles, clerks, pipes, and card tables, together with the confused sounds of conversation rising up on all sides and the noise of moving chairs. He stopped very awkwardly in the middle of the room, looking about and trying to think what to do, but he was observed and received with a shout and they all went at once into the entry and again took a look at his overcoat. Though Akaky Akakievitch was somewhat embarrassed, yet, being a simple-hearted man, he could not help being pleased at seeing how they all admired his coat. Then of course they all abandoned him and his coat, and turned their attention as usual to the tables set for whist. All this—the noise, the talk, and the crowd of people—was strange and wonderful to Akaky Akakievitch: He simply did not know how to behave, what to do with his arms and legs and his whole figure; at last he sat down beside the players, looked at the cards, stared first at one and then at another of the faces, and in a little while began to yawn and felt that he was bored—especially as it was long past the time at which he usually went to bed. He tried to take leave of his hosts, but they

THE OVERCOAT

would not let him go, saying that he absolutely must have a glass of champagne in honour of the new coat. An hour later supper was served, consisting of salad, cold veal, a pasty, pies, and tarts from the confectioner's, and champagne. They made Akaky Akakievitch drink two glasses, after which he felt that things were much more cheerful, though he could not forget that it was twelve o'clock and that he ought to have been home long ago. That his host might not take it into his head to detain him, he slipped out of the room, hunted in the entry for his greatcoat, which he found, not without regret, lying on the floor, shook it, removed some fluff from it, put it on, and went down the stairs into the street. It was still light in the streets. Some little general shops, those perpetual clubs for houseserfs and all sorts of people, were open; others which were closed showed, however, a long streak of light at every crack of the door, proving that they were not yet deserted, and probably maids and men-servants were still finishing their conversation and discussion, driving their masters to utter perplexity as to their whereabouts. Akaky Akakievitch walked along in a cheerful state of mind; he was even on the point of running, goodness knows why, after a lady of some sort who passed by like lightning with every part of her frame in violent motion. He checked himself at once, however, and again walked along very gently, feeling positively surprised himself at the inexplicable impulse that had seized him. Soon the deserted streets, which are not particularly cheerful by day and even less so in the evening, stretched before him. Now they were still more dead and deserted; the light of street lamps was scantier, the oil was evidently running low;

THE OVERCOAT

then came wooden houses and fences; not a soul anywhere; only the snow gleamed on the streets and the low-pitched slumbering hovels looked black and gloomy with their closed shutters. He approached the spot where the street was intersected by an endless square, which looked like a fearful desert with its houses scarcely visible on the further side.

In the distance, goodness knows where, there was a gleam of light from some sentry-box which seemed to be standing at the end of the world. Akaky Akakievitch's light-heartedness grew somehow sensibly less at this place. He stepped into the square, not without an involuntary uneasiness, as though his heart had a foreboding of evil. He looked behind him and to both sides—it was as though the sea were all round him. "No, better not look," he thought, and walked on, shutting his eyes, and when he opened them to see whether the end of the square were near, he suddenly saw standing before him, almost under his very nose, some men with moustaches; just what they were like he could not even distinguish. There was a mist before his eyes and a throbbing in his chest. "I say the overcoat is mine!" said one of them in a voice like a clap of thunder, seizing him by the collar. Akaky Akakievitch was on the point of shouting "Help" when another put a fist the size of a clerk's head against his very lips, saying: "You just shout now." Akaky Akakievitch felt only that they took the overcoat off, and gave him a kick with their knees, and he fell on his face in the snow and was conscious of nothing more. A few minutes later he came to himself and got on to his feet, but there was no one there. He felt that it was cold on the ground and that he

THE OVERCOAT

had no overcoat, and began screaming, but it seemed as though his voice could not carry to the end of the square. Overwhelmed with despair and continuing to scream, he ran across the square straight to the sentry-box, beside which stood a sentry leaning on his halberd and, so it seemed, looking with curiosity to see who the devil the man was who was screaming and running towards him from the distance. As Akaky Akakyeitch reached him, he began breathlessly shouting that he was asleep and not looking after his duty not to see that a man was being robbed. The sentry answered that he had seen nothing, that he had only seen him stopped in the middle of the square by two men, and supposed that they were his friends, and that, instead of abusing him for nothing, he had better go the next day to the superintendent and that he would find out who had taken the overcoat. Akaky Akakyeitch ran home in a terrible state: his hair, which was still comparatively abundant on his temples and the back of his head, was completely dishevelled; his sides and chest and his trousers were all covered with snow. When his old landlady heard a fearful knock at the door she jumped hurriedly out of bed and, with only one slipper on, ran to open it, modestly holding her shift across her bosom; but when she opened it she stepped back, seeing what a state Akaky Akakyeitch was in. When he told her what had happened, she clasped her hands in horror and said that he must go straight to the superintendent, that the police constable of the quarter would deceive him, make promises and lead him a dance; that it would be best of all to go to the superintendent, and that she knew him indeed, because Anna

THE OVERCOAT

the Finnish girl who was once her cook was now in service as a nurse at the superintendent's; and that she often saw him himself when he passed by their house, and that he used to be every Sunday at church too, saying his prayers and at the same time looking good-humouredly at every one, and that therefore by every token he must be a kind-hearted man. After listening to this advice, Akaky Akakyevitch made his way very gloomily to his room, and how he spent that night I leave to the imagination of those who are in the least able to picture the position of others. Early in the morning he set off to the police superintendent's, but was told that he was asleep. He came at ten o'clock, he was told again that he was asleep; he came at eleven and was told that the superintendent was not at home; he came at dinner-time, but the clerks in the ante-room would not let him in, and insisted on knowing what was the matter and what business had brought him and exactly what had happened; so that at last Akaky Akakyevitch for the first time in his life tried to show the strength of his character and said curtly that he must see the superintendent himself, that they dare not refuse to admit him, that he had come from the department on government business, and that if he made complaint of them they would see. The clerks dared say nothing to this, and one of them went to summon the superintendent. The latter received his story of being robbed of his overcoat in an extremely strange way. Instead of attending to the main point, he began asking Akaky Akakyevitch questions, why had he been coming home so late? wasn't he going, or hadn't he been, to some house of ill-fame? so that Akaky Akakyevitch was over-

THE OVERCOAT

whelmed with confusion, and went away without knowing whether or not the proper measures would be taken in regard to his overcoat. He was absent from the office all that day (the only time that it had happened in his life). Next day he appeared with a pale face, wearing his old "dressing jacket" which had become a still more pitiful sight. The tidings of the theft of the overcoat—though there were clerks who did not let even this chance slip of jeering at Akaky Akakye-*vitch*—touched many of them. They decided on the spot to get up a subscription for him, but collected only a very trifling sum, because the clerks had already spent a good deal on subscribing to the director's portrait and on the purchase of a book, at the suggestion of the head of their department, who was a friend of the author, and so the total realised was very insignificant. One of the clerks, moved by compassion, ventured at any rate to assist Akaky Akakye-*vitch* with good advice, telling him not to go to the district police inspector, because, though it might happen that the latter might be sufficiently zealous of gaining the approval of his superiors to succeed in finding the overcoat, it would remain in the possession of the police unless he presented legal proofs that it belonged to him; he urged that far the best thing would be to appeal to a Person of Consequence; that the Person of Consequence, by writing and getting into communication with the proper authorities, could push the matter through more successfully. There was nothing else for it. Akaky Akakye-*vitch* made up his mind to go to the Person of Consequence. What precisely was the nature of the functions of the Person of Consequence has remained a matter of uncertainty.

THE OVERCOAT

It must be noted that this Person of Consequence had only lately become a person of consequence, and until recently had been a person of no consequence. Though, indeed, his position even now was not reckoned of consequence in comparison with others of still greater consequence. But there is always to be found a circle of persons to whom a person of little consequence in the eyes of others is a person of consequence. It is true that he did his utmost to increase the consequence of his position in various ways, for instance by insisting that his subordinates should come out on to the stairs to meet him when he arrived at his office; that no one should venture to approach him directly but all proceedings should be by the strictest order of precedence, that a collegiate registration clerk should report the matter to the provincial secretary, and the provincial secretary to the titular councillor or whomsoever it might be, and that business should only reach him by this channel. Every one in Holy Russia has a craze for imitation, every one apes and mimics his superiors. I have actually been told that a titular councillor who was put in charge of a small separate office, immediately partitioned off a special room for himself, calling it the head office, and set special porters at the door with red collars and gold lace, who took hold of the handle of the door and opened it for every one who went in, though the "head office" was so tiny that it was with difficulty that an ordinary writing table could be put into it. The manners and habits of the Person of Consequence were dignified and majestic, but not complex. The chief foundation of his system was strictness, "strictness, strictness, and—strictness!" he used to say, and at the last word he would look

very significantly at the person he was addressing, though, indeed, he had no reason to do so, for the dozen clerks who made up the whole administrative mechanism of his office stood in befitting awe of him; any clerk who saw him in the distance would leave his work and remain standing at attention till his superior had left the room. His conversation with his subordinates was usually marked by severity and almost confined to three phrases: "How dare you? Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you understand who I am?" He was, however, at heart a good-natured man, pleasant and obliging with his colleagues; but the grade of general had completely turned his head. When he received it, he was perplexed, thrown off his balance, and quite at a loss how to behave. If he chanced to be with his equals, he was still quite a decent man, a very gentlemanly man, in fact, and in many ways even an intelligent man, but as soon as he was in company with men who were even one grade below him, there was simply no doing anything with him: he sat silent and his position excited compassion, the more so as he himself felt that he might have been spending his time to incomparably more advantage. At times there could be seen in his eyes an intense desire to join in some interesting conversation, but he was restrained by the doubt whether it would not be too much on his part, whether it would not be too great a familiarity and lowering of his dignity, and in consequence of these reflections he remained everlastingly in the same mute condition, only uttering from time to time monosyllabic sounds, and in this way he gained the reputation of being a very tiresome man.

THE OVERCOAT

So this was the Person of Consequence to whom our friend Akaky Akakyeitch appealed, and he appealed to him at a most unpropitious moment, very unfortunate for himself, though fortunate, indeed, for the Person of Consequence. The latter happened to be in his study, talking in the very best of spirits with an old friend of his childhood who had only just arrived and whom he had not seen for several years. It was at this moment that he was informed that a man called Bashmatchkin was asking to see him. He asked abruptly, "What sort of man is he?" and received the answer, "A government clerk." "Ah! he can wait, I haven't time now," said the Person of Consequence. Here I must observe that this was a complete lie on the part of the Person of Consequence: he had time; his friend and he had long ago said all they had to say to each other and their conversation had begun to be broken by very long pauses during which they merely slapped each other on the knee, saying, "So that's how things are, Ivan Abramovitch!"—"There it is, Stepan Varlamovitch!" but, for all that, he told the clerk to wait in order to show his friend, who had left the service years before and was living at home in the country how long clerks had to wait in his ante-room. At last after they had talked, or rather been silent to their heart's content and had smoked a cigar in very comfortable arm-chairs with sloping backs, he seemed suddenly to recollect, and said to the secretary, who was standing at the door with papers for his signature: "Oh, by the way, there is a clerk waiting, isn't there? tell him he can come in." When he saw Akaky Akakyeitch's meek appearance and old uniform, he turned to him at once

THE OVERCOAT

and said: "What do you want?" in a firm and abrupt voice, which he had purposely practised in his own room in solitude before the looking-glass for a week before receiving his present post and the grade of a general. Akaky Akakyevitch, who was overwhelmed with befitting awe beforehand, was somewhat confused and, as far as his tongue would allow him, explained to the best of his powers, with even more frequent "ers" than usual, that he had had a perfectly new overcoat and now he had been robbed of it in the most inhuman way, and that now he had come to beg him by his intervention either to correspond with his honour the head policeman or anybody else, and find the overcoat. This mode of proceeding struck the general for some reason as taking a great liberty. "What next, sir," he went on as abruptly, "don't you know the way to proceed? To whom are you addressing yourself? Don't you know how things are done? You ought first to have handed in a petition to the office; it would have gone to the head clerk of the room, and to the head clerk of the section, then it would have been handed to the secretary and the secretary would have brought it to me. . . ."

"But, your Excellency," said Akaky Akakyevitch, trying to collect all the small allowance of presence of mind he possessed and feeling at the same time that he was getting into a terrible perspiration, "I ventured, your Excellency, to trouble you because secretaries . . . er . . . are people you can't depend on. . . ."

"What? what? what?" said the Person of Consequence, "where did you get hold of that spirit? where did you pick up such ideas? What insubordination is

THE OVERCOAT

spreading among young men against their superiors and betters." The Person of Consequence did not apparently observe that Akaky Akakyeitch was well over fifty, and therefore if he could have been called a young man it would only have been in comparison with a man of seventy. "Do you know to whom you are speaking? do you understand who I am? do you understand that, I ask you?" At this point he stamped, and raised his voice to such a powerful note that Akaky Akakyeitch was not the only one to be terrified. Akaky Akakyeitch was positively petrified; he staggered, trembling all over, and could not stand; if the porters had not run up to support him, he would have flopped upon the floor; he was led out almost unconscious. The Person of Consequence, pleased that the effect had surpassed his expectations and enchanted at the idea that his words could even deprive a man of consciousness, stole a sideways glance at his friend to see how he was taking it, and perceived not without satisfaction that his friend was feeling very uncertain and even beginning to be a little terrified himself.

How he got downstairs, how he went out into the street—of all that Akaky Akakyeitch remembered nothing, he had no feeling in his arms or his legs. In all his life he had never been so severely reprimanded by a general, and this was by one of another department, too. He went out into the snowstorm, that was whistling through the streets, with his mouth open, and as he went he stumbled off the pavement; the wind, as its way is in Petersburg, blew upon him from all points of the compass and from every side street. In an instant it had blown a quinsy into his throat, and

THE OVERCOAT

when he got home he was not able to utter a word; with a swollen face and throat he went to bed. So violent is sometimes the effect of a suitable reprimand!

Next day he was in a high fever. Thanks to the gracious assistance of the Petersburg climate, the disease made more rapid progress than could have been expected, and when the doctor came, after feeling his pulse he could find nothing to do but prescribe a fomentation, and that simply that the patient might not be left without the benefit of medical assistance; however, two days later he informed him that his end was at hand, after which he turned to his landlady and said: "And you had better lose no time, my good woman, but order him now a deal coffin, for an oak one will be too dear for him." Whether Akaky Akakyevitch heard these fateful words or not, whether they produced a shattering effect upon him, and whether he regretted his pitiful life, no one can tell, for he was all the time in delirium and fever. Apparitions, each stranger than the one before, were continually haunting him: first, he saw Petrovitch and was ordering him to make a greatcoat trimmed with some sort of traps for robbers, who were, he fancied, continually under the bed, and he was calling his landlady every minute to pull out a thief who had even got under the quilt; then he kept asking why his old "dressing jacket" was hanging before him when he had a new overcoat, then he fancied he was standing before the general listening to the appropriate reprimand and saying "I am sorry, your Excellency," then finally he became abusive, uttering the most awful language, so that his old landlady positively

THE OVERCOAT

crossed herself, having never heard anything of the kind from him before, and the more horrified because these dreadful words followed immediately upon the phrase "your Excellency." Later on, his talk was a mere medley of nonsense, so that it was quite unintelligible; all that could be seen was that his incoherent words and thoughts were concerned with nothing but the overcoat. At last poor Akaky Akakyeitch gave up the ghost. No seal was put upon his room nor upon his things, because, in the first place, he had no heirs and, in the second, the property left was very small, to wit, a bundle of goose-feathers, a quire of white government paper, three pairs of socks, two or three buttons that had come off his trousers, and the "dressing jacket" with which the reader is already familiar. Who came into all this wealth God only knows, even I who tell the tale must own that I have not troubled to enquire. And Petersburg remained without Akaky Akakyeitch, as though, indeed, he had never been in the city. A creature had vanished and departed whose cause no one had championed, who was dear to no one, of interest to no one, who never even attracted the attention of the student of natural history, though the latter does not disdain to fix a common fly upon a pin and look at him under the microscope—a creature who bore patiently the jeers of the office and for no particular reason went to his grave, though even he at the very end of his life was visited by a gleam of brightness in the form of an overcoat that for one instant brought colour into his poor life—a creature on whom calamity broke as insufferably as it breaks upon the heads of the mighty ones of this world . . . !

Several days after his death, the porter from the

THE OVERCOAT

department was sent to his lodgings with instructions that he should go at once to the office, for his chief was asking for him; but the porter was obliged to return without him, explaining that he could not come, and to the enquiry "Why?" he added, "Well, you see: the fact is he is dead, he was buried three days ago." This was how they learned at the office of the death of Akaky Akakyevitch, and the next day there was sitting in his seat a new clerk who was very much taller and who wrote not in the same upright hand but made his letters more slanting and crooked.

But who could have imagined that this was not all there was to tell about Akaky Akakyevitch, that he was destined for a few days to make a noise in the world after his death, as though to make up for his life having been unnoticed by any one? But so it happened, and our poor story unexpectedly finishes with a fantastic ending. Rumours were suddenly floating about Petersburg that in the neighbourhood of the Kalinkin Bridge and for a little distance beyond, a corpse had taken to appearing at night in the form of a clerk looking for a stolen overcoat, and stripping from the shoulders of all passers-by, regardless of grade and calling, overcoats of all descriptions—trimmed with cat fur, or beaver or wadded, lined with raccoon, fox and bear—made, in fact, of all sorts of skin which men have adapted for the covering of their own. One of the clerks of the department saw the corpse with his own eyes and at once recognised it as Akaky Akakyevitch; but it excited in him such terror, however, that he ran away as fast as his legs could carry him and so could not get a very clear view of

THE OVERCOAT

him, and only saw him hold up his finger threateningly in the distance.

From all sides complaints were continually coming that backs and shoulders, not of mere titular councillors, but even of upper court councillors, had been exposed to taking chills, owing to being stripped of their greatcoats. Orders were given to the police to catch the corpse regardless of trouble or expense, alive or dead, and to punish him in the cruellest way, as an example to others, and, indeed, they very nearly succeeded in doing so. The sentry of one district police station in Kiryushkin Place snatched a corpse by the collar on the spot of the crime in the very act of attempting to snatch a frieze overcoat from a retired musician, who used in his day to play the flute. Having caught him by the collar, he shouted until he had brought two other comrades, whom he charged to hold him while he felt just a minute in his boot to get out a snuff-box in order to revive his nose which had six times in his life been frost-bitten, but the snuff was probably so strong that not even a dead man could stand it. The sentry had hardly had time to put his finger over his right nostril and draw up some snuff in the left when the corpse sneezed violently right into the eyes of all three. While they were putting their fists up to wipe them, the corpse completely vanished, so that they were not even sure whether he had actually been in their hands. From that time forward, the sentries conceived such a horror of the dead that they were even afraid to seize the living and confined themselves to shouting from the distance: "Hi, you there, be off!" and the dead clerk began to appear even

on the other side of the Kalinkin Bridge, rousing no little terror in all timid people.

We have, however, quite deserted the Person of Consequence, who may in reality almost be said to be the cause of the fantastic ending of this perfectly true story. To begin with, my duty requires me to do justice to the Person of Consequence by recording that soon after poor Akaky Akakyeitch had gone away crushed to powder, he felt something not unlike regret. Sympathy was a feeling not unknown to him; his heart was open to many kindly impulses, although his exalted grade very often prevented them from being shown. As soon as his friend had gone out of his study, he even began brooding over poor Akaky Akakyeitch, and from that time forward, he was almost every day haunted by the image of the poor clerk who had succumbed so completely to the befitting reprimand. The thought of the man so worried him that a week later he actually decided to send a clerk to find out how he was and whether he really could help him in any way. And when they brought him word that Akaky Akakyeitch had died suddenly in delirium and fever, it made a great impression on him, his conscience reproached him and he was depressed all day. Anxious to distract his mind and to forget the unpleasant impression, he went to spend the evening with one of his friends, where he found a genteel company and, what was best of all, almost every one was of the same grade so that he was able to be quite free from restraint. This had a wonderful effect on his spirits, he expanded, became affable and genial—in short, spent a very agreeable evening. At supper he drank a couple of glasses of champagne—a

THE OVERCOAT

proceeding which we all know has a happy effect in inducing good-humour. The champagne made him inclined to do something unusual, and he decided not to go home yet but to visit a lady of his acquaintance, one Karolina Ivanovna—a lady apparently of German extraction, for whom he entertained extremely friendly feelings. It must be noted that the Person of Consequence was a man no longer young, an excellent husband, and the respectable father of a family. He had two sons, one already serving in his office, and a nice-looking daughter of sixteen with a rather turned-up, pretty little nose, who used to come every morning to kiss his hand, saying: "*Bon jour, Papa.*" His wife, who was still blooming and decidedly good-looking, indeed, used first to give him her hand to kiss and then would kiss his hand, turning it the other side upwards. But though the Person of Consequence was perfectly satisfied with the kind amenities of his domestic life, he thought it proper to have a lady friend in another quarter of the town. This lady friend was not a bit better looking nor younger than his wife, but these mysterious facts exist in the world and it is not our business to criticise them. And so the Person of Consequence went downstairs, got into his sledge, and said to his coachman, "To Karolina Ivanovna," while luxuriously wrapped in his warm fur coat he remained in that agreeable frame of mind sweeter to a Russian than anything that could be invented, that is, when one thinks of nothing while thoughts come into the mind of themselves, one pleasanter than the other, without the labour of following them or looking for them. Full of satisfaction, he recalled all the amusing moments of the evening he

THE OVERCOAT

had spent, all the phrases that had set the little circle laughing; many of them he repeated in an undertone and found them as amusing as before, and so, very naturally, laughed very heartily at them again. From time to time, however, he was disturbed by a gust of wind which, blowing suddenly, God knows whence and wherefore, cut him in the face, pelting him with flakes of snow, puffing out his coat-collar like a sack, or suddenly flinging it with unnatural force over his head and giving him endless trouble to extricate himself from it. All at once, the Person of Consequence felt that some one had clutched him very tightly by the collar. Turning round he saw a short man in a shabby old uniform, and not without horror recognized him as Akaky Akakyevitch. The clerk's face was white as snow and looked like that of a corpse, but the horror of the Person of Consequence was beyond all bounds when he saw the mouth of the corpse distorted into speech and, breathing upon him the chill of the grave, it uttered the following words: "Ah, so here you are at last! At last I've . . . er . . . caught you by the collar. It's your overcoat I want, you refused to help me and abused me into the bargain! So now give me yours!" The poor Person of Consequence very nearly died. Resolute and determined as he was in his office and before subordinates in general, and though any one looking at his manly air and figure would have said: "Oh, what a man of character!" yet in this plight he felt, like very many persons of athletic appearance, such terror that not without reason he began to be afraid he would have some sort of fit. He actually flung his overcoat off his shoulders as fast as he could and shouted to his coach-

THE OVERCOAT

man in a voice unlike his own: "Drive home and make haste!" The coachman, hearing the tone which he had only heard in critical moments and then accompanied by something even more rousing, hunched his shoulders up to his ears in case of worse following, swung his whip and flew on like an arrow. In a little over six minutes the Person of Consequence was at the entrance of his own house. Pale, panic-stricken, and without his overcoat, he arrived home instead of at Karolina Ivanovna's, dragged himself to his own room and spent the night in great perturbation, so that next morning his daughter said to him at breakfast, "You look quite pale to-day, Papa": but her papa remained mute and said not a word to any one of what had happened to him, where he had been, and where he had been going. The incident made a great impression upon him. Indeed, it happened far more rarely that he said to his subordinates, "How dare you? do you understand who I am?" and he never uttered those words at all until he had first heard all the rights of the case.

What was even more remarkable is that from that time the apparition of the dead clerk ceased entirely: apparently the general's overcoat had fitted him perfectly, anyway nothing more was heard of overcoats being snatched from any one. Many restless and anxious people refused, however, to be pacified, and still maintained that in remote parts of the town the ghost of the dead clerk went on appearing. One sentry in Kolomna, for instance, saw with his own eyes a ghost appear from behind a house; but, being by natural constitution somewhat feeble—so much so that on one occasion an ordinary, well-grown pig, making a sudden

THE OVERCOAT

dash out of some building, knocked him off his feet to the vast entertainment of the cabmen standing round, from whom he exacted two kopecks each for snuff for such rudeness—he did not dare to stop it, and so followed it in the dark until the ghost suddenly looked round and, stopping, asked him: “What do you want?” displaying a fist such as you never see among the living. The sentry said: “Nothing,” and turned back on the spot. This ghost, however, was considerably taller and adorned with immense moustaches, and, directing its steps apparently towards Obuhov Bridge, vanished into the darkness of the night.

THE CARRIAGE



THE CARRIAGE

THE little town of B. has grown much more lively since a cavalry regiment began to be stationed in it. Till then it was fearfully dull. When one drove through it and glanced at the low-pitched, painted houses which looked into the street with an incredibly sour expression . . . well, it is impossible to put into words what things were like there: it is as dejecting as though one had lost money at cards, or just said something stupid and inappropriate—in short, it is depressing. The plaster on the houses has peeled off with the rain, and the walls instead of being white are piebald; the roofs are for the most part thatched with reeds, as is usual in our Southern towns. The gardens have long ago, by order of the police-master, been cut down to improve the look of the place. There is never a soul to be met in the streets; at most a cock crosses the road, soft as a pillow from the dust that lies on it eight inches thick and at the slightest drop of rain is transformed into mud, and then the streets of the town of B. are filled with those corpulent animals which the local police-master calls Frenchmen; thrusting out their solemn snouts from their baths, they set up such a grunting that the traveller can do nothing but urge on his horses. It is not easy, however, to meet a traveller in the town of B. On rare, very rare occa-

THE CARRIAGE

sions, some country gentleman, owning eleven souls of serfs and dressed in a full nankeen coat, jolts over the road in something between a chaise and a cart, and peeps out from behind piled-up sacks of flour, as he lashes his solemn mare behind whom runs a colt. Even the market-place has rather a melancholy air: the tailor's shop stands out very foolishly with one corner to the street instead of the whole shop-front; facing it, a brick building with two windows has been in the course of construction for fifteen years: a little further, standing all by itself, there is one of those paling fences so fashionable, painted grey to match the mud, and erected as a model for other buildings by the police-master in the days of his youth, before he had formed the habit of sleeping immediately after dinner and drinking at night a beverage flavoured with dry gooseberries. In other parts the fences are all of hurdle. In the middle of the square, there are very tiny shops; in them one may always see a bunch of bread rings, a peasant woman in a red kerchief, a hundredweight of soap, a few pounds of bitter almonds, small shot for sportsmen, some cotton-shoddy material, and two shopmen who spend all their time playing a sort of quoits near the door.

But as soon as the cavalry regiment was stationed at the little town of B. everything was changed: the streets were full of life and colour, in fact, they assumed quite a different aspect; the low-pitched little houses often saw a graceful, well-built officer with a plume on his head passing by on his way to discuss promotion or the best kind of tobacco with a comrade, or sometimes to play cards for the stake of a chaise, which might have been described as the regimental

THE CARRIAGE

chaise for, without ever leaving the regiment, it had already gone the round of all the officers: one day the major rolled up in it, the next day it was to be seen in the lieutenant's stable, and a week later, lo and behold, the major's orderly was greasing its wheels again. The wooden fence between the houses was always studded with soldiers' caps hanging in the sun; a grey military overcoat was always conspicuous on some gate; in the side streets soldiers were to be seen with moustaches as stiff as boot-brushes. These moustaches were on view everywhere; if workwomen gathered in the market with their tin mugs, one could always get a glimpse of a moustache behind their shoulders. The officers brought life into the local society which ^{house} until then consisted of a judge, who lived in the ^{team} _{ed} house with a deacon's wife, and a police-master, who was a very sagacious person, but slept absolutely the whole day from dinner-time until evening and from evening until dinner-time. Society gained even more in numbers and interest when the headquarters of the general of the brigade were transferred to the town. Neighbouring landowners, whose existence no one would previously have suspected, began visiting the district town more frequently to see the officers and sometimes to play a game of "bank," of which there was an extremely hazy notion in their brains, busy with thoughts of crops and hares and their wives' commissions.

I am very sorry that I cannot recall what circumstance it was that led the general of the brigade to give a big dinner; preparations for it were made on a vast scale; the clatter of the cooks' knives in the general's kitchen could be heard almost as far as the

town gate. The whole market was completely cleared for the dinner, so that the judge and his deaconess had nothing to eat but buckwheat cakes and cornflour-shape. The little courtyard of the general's quarters was packed with chaises and carriages. The company consisted of gentlemen—officers and a few neighbouring landowners. Of the latter, the most noteworthy was Pifagor Pifagorovitch Tchertokutsky, one of the leading aristocrats of the district of B., who made more noise than any one at the elections and drove to them in a very smart carriage. He had once served in a cavalry regiment and had been one of its most important and conspicuous officers, anyway he had been seen at numerous balls and assemblies, where his regiment had been stationed; the young ladies of the Tambov and Simbirsk provinces, however, can never tell us most about that. It is very possible that he would have gained a desirable reputation in other provinces, too, if he had not resigned his commission owing to one of those incidents which are usually described as “an unpleasantness”; either he had given some one a box on the ear in old days, or was given it, which I don't remember for certain; anyway, the point is that he was asked to resign his commission. He lost nothing of his importance through this, however. He wore a high-waisted dress-coat of military cut, spurs on his boots, and a moustache under his nose, since, but for that, the nobility of his province might have supposed that he had served in the infantry, which he always spoke of contemptuously. He visited all the much-frequented fairs, to which those who make up the heart of Russia, that is, the nurses and children, stout landowners and their daughters, flock to enjoy themselves, driving

THE CARRIAGE

in chaises with hoods, gigs, waggonettes, and carriages such as have never been seen in the wildest dreams. He had a special scent for where a cavalry regiment was stationed, and always went to interview the officers, very nimbly leaping out of his light carriage in view of them and very quickly making their acquaintance. At the last election he had given the nobility of the provinces an excellent dinner, at which he had declared that, if only he were elected Marshal, he "would put the gentry on the best possible footing." Altogether he lived like a gentleman, as the expression goes in the provinces; he married a rather pretty wife, getting with her a dowry of two hundred souls and some thousands in cash. This last was at once spent on a team of six really first-rate horses, gilt locks on the doors, a tame monkey, and a French butler for the household. The two hundred souls, together with two hundred of his own, were mortgaged to the bank for the sake of some commercial operations.

In short, he was a proper sort of landowner, a very decent sort of landowner. . . .

Apart from this gentleman, there were a few other landowners at the general's dinner, but there is no need to describe them. The other guests were the officers of the same regiment, besides two staff-officers, a colonel, and a rather stout major. The general himself was a thick-set, corpulent person, though an excellent commanding officer, so the others said of him. He spoke in a rather thick, consequential bass. The dinner was remarkable: sturgeon of various sorts, as well as sterlet, bustards, asparagus, quails, partridges, and mushrooms testified to the fact that the cook had

THE CARRIAGE

not had a drop of anything strong between his lips since the previous day, and that four soldiers had been at work with knives in their hands all night, helping him with the fricassee and the jelly. A multitude of bottles, tall ones with Lafitte, and short ones with Madeira; a lovely summer day, windows wide open, plates of ice on the table, the crumpled shirt-fronts of the owners of extremely roomy dress coats, a cross-fire of conversation drowned by the general's voice and washed down by champagne—all was in keeping. After dinner they all got up from the table with an agreeable heaviness in their stomachs, and, after lighting pipes, some with long and some with short mouth-pieces, went out on to the steps with cups of coffee in their hands.

"You can look at her now," said the general; "if you please, my dear boy," he went on, addressing his adjutant, a rather sprightly young man of agreeable appearance, "tell them to bring the bay mare round! here you shall see for yourself." At this point the general took a pull at his pipe and blew out the smoke, "she is not quite well-groomed: this wretched, accursed little town! She is a very"—puff-puff—"decent mare!"

"And have you"—puff-puff—"had her long, your Excellency?" said Tchertokutsky.

"Well . . ." puff-puff-puff . . . "not so long; it's only two years since I had her from the stud-stables."

"And did you get her broken in, or have you been breaking her in here, your Excellency?"

Puff-puff-pu—ff pu—ff, "Here," saying this the general completely disappeared in smoke.

THE CARRIAGE

Meanwhile a soldier skipped out of the stables, the thud of hoofs was audible, and at last another soldier with hugh black moustaches, wearing a white smock, appeared, leading by the bridle a trembling and frightened mare, who, suddenly flinging up her head, almost lifted the soldier together with his moustaches into the air.

"There, there, Agrafena Ivanovna!" he said, leading her up to the steps.

The mare's name was Agrafena Ivanovna. Strong and wild as a beauty of the south, she stamped her hoof upon the wooden steps, then suddenly stopped.

The general, laying down his pipe, began with a satisfied air looking at Agrafena Ivanovna. The colonel himself went down the steps and took Agrafena Ivanovna by the nose, the major patted Agrafena Ivanovna on the leg, the others made a clicking sound with their tongues.

Tchertokutsky went down and approached her from behind, the soldier, drawn up to attention and holding the bridle, looked straight into the visitor's eyes as though he wanted to jump into them.

"Very, very fine," said Tchertokutsky, "a horse with excellent points! And allow me to ask your Excellency, how does she go?"

"Her action is very good, only . . . that fool of a doctor's assistant, the devil take the man, gave her pills of some sort and for the last two days she has done nothing but sneeze."

"Very fine horse, very; and have you a suitable carriage, your Excellency?"

"A carriage? . . . But she is a saddle-horse, you know."

THE CARRIAGE

"I know that, but I asked your Excellency to find out whether you have a suitable carriage for your other horses."

"Well, I am not very well off for carriages I must own; I have long been wanting to get an up-to-date one. I have written to my brother who is in Petersburg just now, but I don't know whether he'll send me one or not."

"I think, your Excellency, there are no better carriages than the Viennese."

"You are quite right there," puff-puff-puff——

"I have an excellent carriage, your Excellency, of real Vienna make."

"What is it like? Is it the one you came here in?"

"Oh no, that's just for rough work, for my excursions, but the other. . . . It is a wonder! light as a feather, and when you are in it, it is simply, saving your Excellency's presence, as though your nurse were rocking you in the cradle!"

"So it is comfortable?"

"Very comfortable indeed: cushions, springs and all looking like a picture."

"That's nice."

"And so roomy! As a matter of fact, your Excellency, I have never seen one like it. When I was in the service I used to put a dozen bottles of rum and twenty pounds of tobacco in the boxes, and besides that I used to have about six uniforms and underlinen and two pipes, the very long ones, your Excellency, while you could put a whole ox in the pockets."

"That's nice."

"It cost four thousand, your Excellency."

THE CARRIAGE

"At that price it ought to be good; and did you buy it yourself?"

"No, your Excellency, it came to me by chance; it was bought by my friend, the companion of my childhood, a rare man with whom you would have got on perfectly, your Excellency; we were on such terms that what was his was mine, it was all the same. I won it from him at cards. Would you care, your Excellency, to do me the honour to dine with me to-morrow, and you could have a look at the carriage at the same time?"

"I really don't know what to say . . . for me to come alone like that . . . would you allow me to bring my fellow-officers?"

"I beg the other officers to come too. Gentlemen! I shall think it a great pleasure to see you in my house."

The colonel, the major, and the other officers thanked him with a polite bow.

"What I think, your Excellency, is that if one buys a thing it must be good, if it is not good there is no use having it. When you do me the honour to visit me to-morrow, I will show you a few other things I have bought in the useful line."

The general looked at him and blew smoke out of his mouth. Tchertokutsky was highly delighted at having invited the officers: he was inwardly ordering pasties and sauces while he looked very good-humouredly at the gentlemen in question, who for their part, too, seemed to feel twice as amiably disposed to him, as could be discerned from their eyes and the small movements they made in the way of

half-bows. Tchertokutsky put himself forward with a more free-and-easy air, and there was a melting tone in his voice as though it were weighed down with pleasure.

"There, your Excellency, you will make the acquaintance of my wife."

"I shall be delighted," said the general, stroking his moustache.

After that Tchertokutsky wanted to set off home at once that he might be beforehand in preparing everything for the reception of his guests and the dinner to be offered them; he took up his hat, but, strangely enough, it happened that he stayed on for some time. Meanwhile card-tables were set in the room. Soon the whole company was divided into parties of four for whist and sat down in the different corners of the general's rooms. Candles were brought; for a long time Tchertokutsky was uncertain whether to sit down to whist or not, but as the officers began to press him to do so, he felt that it would be a breach of the rules of civility to refuse and he sat down for a little while. By his side there appeared from somewhere a glass of punch which, without noticing it, he drank off instantly. After winning two rubbers Tchertokutsky again found a glass of punch at hand and again without observing it emptied the glass, though he did say first: "It's time for me to be getting home, gentlemen, it really is time," but again he sat down to the second game.

Meanwhile conversation assumed an entirely personal character in the different corners of the room. The whist players were rather silent, but those who were not playing sat on sofas at one side and kept up

THE CARRIAGE

a conversation of their own. In one corner the staff-captain, with a cushion thrust under his back and a pipe between his teeth, was recounting in a free and flowing style his amatory adventures, which completely absorbed the attention of a circle gathered round him. One extremely fat landowner with short hands rather like overgrown potatoes was listening with an extraordinary mawkish air, and only from time to time exerted himself to get his short arm behind his broad back and pull out his snuff-box. In another corner a rather heated discussion sprang up concerning squadron drill, and Tchertokutsky, who about that time twice threw down a knave instead of a queen, suddenly intervened in this conversation, which was not addressed to him, and shouted from his corner: "In what year?" or "Which regiment?" without observing that the question had nothing to do with the matter under discussion. At last, a few minutes before supper, they left off playing, though the games went on verbally and it seemed as though the heads of all were full of whist. Tchertokutsky remembered perfectly that he had won a great deal, but he picked up nothing, and getting up from the tables stood for a long time in the attitude of a man who has found he has no pocket-handkerchief. Meanwhile supper was served. It need hardly be said that there was no lack of wines and that Tchertokutsky was almost obliged to fill up his glass at times, since there were bottles standing on the right and on the left of him.

A very long conversation dragged on at table, but it was rather oddly conducted. One colonel who had served in the campaign of 1812 described a battle such as had certainly never taken place, and then, I am

THE CARRIAGE

quite unable to say for what reason, took the stopper out of the decanter and stuck it in the pudding. In short, by the time the party began to break up it was three o'clock, and the coachmen were obliged to carry some of the gentlemen in their arms as though they had been parcels of purchases, and in spite of all his aristocratic breeding Tchertokutsky bowed so low and with such a violent lurch of his head, as he got into his carriage, that he brought two burrs home with him on his moustache.

At home every one was sound asleep. The coachman had some difficulty in finding a footman, who conducted his master across the drawing-room and handed him over to a maid-servant, in whose charge Tchertokutsky made his way to his bedroom and got into bed beside his young and pretty wife, who was lying in the most enchanting way in snow-white sleeping-attire. The jolt made by her husband falling upon the bed awakened her. Stretching, lifting her eyelashes and three times rapidly blinking her eyes, she opened them with a half-angry smile, but seeing that he absolutely declined on this occasion to show any interest in her, she turned over on the other side in vexation, and laying her fresh little cheek on her arm soon afterwards fell asleep.

It was at an hour which would not in the country be described as early that the young mistress of the house woke up beside her snoring spouse. Remembering that it had been nearly four o'clock in the morning when he came home, she did not like to wake him, and so, putting on her bedroom slippers which her husband had ordered for her from Petersburg, with a white dressing-gown draped about her like a flowing

THE CARRIAGE

stream, she washed in water as fresh as herself and proceeded to attire herself for the day. Glancing at herself a couple of times in the mirror, she saw that she was looking very nice that morning. This apparently insignificant circumstance led her to spend two hours extra before the looking-glass. At last she was very charmingly dressed and went out to take an airing in the garden. As luck would have it, the weather was as lovely as it can only be on a summer day in the South. The sun, which was approaching the zenith, was blazing hot; but it was cool walking in the thick, dark avenue, and the flowers were three times as fragrant in the warmth of the sun. The pretty young wife quite forgot that it was now twelve o'clock and her husband was still asleep. Already she could hear the after-dinner snores of two coachmen and one postillion sleeping in the stable beyond the garden, but she still sat on in a shady avenue from which there was an open view of the high-road, and was absent-mindedly watching it, stretching empty and deserted into the distance, when all at once a cloud of dust appearing in that distance attracted her attention. Gazing intently, she soon discerned several carriages. The foremost was a light open carriage with two seats. In it was sitting a general with thick epaulettes that gleamed in the sun, and beside him a colonel. It was followed by another carriage with seats for four in which were the major, the general's adjutant, and two officers sitting opposite. Then came the regimental chaise, familiar to every one, at the moment in the possession of the fat major. The chaise was followed by a *bon-voyage*, in which there were four officers seated and

a fifth on their knees, then came three officers on excellent, dark bay dappled horses.

"Then they may be coming to us," thought the lady. "Oh, my goodness, they really are! They have turned at the bridge!" She uttered a shriek, clasped her hands and ran right over the flower-beds straight to her husband's bedroom; he was sleeping like the dead.

"Get up! Get up! Make haste and get up!" she shouted, tugging at his arm.

"What?" murmured Tchertokutsky, not opening his eyes.

"Get up, poppet! Do you hear, visitors!"

"Visitors? What visitors?" . . . Saying this he uttered a slight grunt such as a calf gives when it is looking for its mother's udder, "Mm . . ." he muttered: "stoop your neck, precious! I'll give you a kiss."

"Darling, get up, for goodness' sake, make haste! The general and the officers! Oh dear, you've got a burr on your moustache!"

"The general! So he is coming already, then? But why the devil did nobody wake me? And the dinner, what about the dinner? Is everything ready that's wanted?"

"What dinner?"

"Why, didn't I order it?"

"You came back at four o'clock in the morning and you did not say one word to me, however much I questioned you. I didn't wake you, poppet, because I felt sorry for you, you had had no sleep. . . ."

The last words she uttered in an extremely supplicating and languishing voice.

THE CARRIAGE

Tchertokutsky lay for a minute in bed with his eyes starting out of his head, as though struck by a thunder-bolt. At last he jumped out of bed with nothing but his shirt on, forgetting that this was quite unseemly.

"Oh, I am an ass!" he said, slapping himself on the forehead; "I invited them to dinner! What's to be done? Are they far off?"

"I don't know. . . . I expect they will be here every minute."

"My love . . . hide yourself. . . . Hey, who's there? You wretched girl, come in; what are you afraid of, silly? The officers will be here in a minute: you say that your master is not at home, say that he won't be home at all, that he went out early in the morning. . . . Do you hear? and tell all the servants the same; make haste!" Saying this, he hurriedly snatched up his dressing-gown and ran to hide in the carriage-house, supposing that there he would be in a position of complete security, but, standing in the corner of the carriage-house, he saw that even there he might be seen. "Ah, this will be better," flashed through his mind, and in one minute he flung down the steps of the carriage standing near, leapt in, closed the door after him, for greater security covering himself with the apron and the leather, and lay perfectly still, curled up in his dressing-gown.

Meanwhile the carriages drove up to the front steps. The general stepped out and shook himself; after him the colonel, smoothing the plume of his hat with his hands, then the fat major, holding his sabre under his arm, jumped out of the chaise, the slim sub-lieutenants skipped down from the *bon-voyage* with the lieutenant who had been sitting on the other's knees, and, last

THE CARRIAGE

of all, the officers who had been elegantly riding on horseback alighted from their saddles.

"The master is not at home," said a footman, coming out on to the steps.

"Not at home? He'll be back at dinner, I suppose?"

"No. His Honour has gone out for the whole day. He won't be back until to-morrow about this time perhaps."

"Well, upon my soul," said the general. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I must own it is queer," said the colonel, laughing.

"No, really . . . how can he behave like this?" the general went on with displeasure. "Whew! . . . the devil . . . why, if he can't receive people, what does he ask them for?"

"I can't understand how any one could do it, your Excellency," a young officer observed.

"What, what?" said the general, who had the habit of always uttering this interrogative monosyllable when he was talking to an officer.

"I said, your Excellency, that it is not the way to behave!"

"Naturally . . . why, if anything has happened, he might let us know at any rate, or else not have asked us."

"Well, your Excellency, there is no help for it, we shall have to go back," said the colonel.

"Of course, there is nothing else for it. We can look at the carriage though without him; it is not likely he has taken it with him. Hey, you there! Come here, my man!"

"What is your pleasure?"

THE CARRIAGE

"Are you the stable-boy?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

"Show us the new carriage your master got lately."

"This way, sir; come to the carriage-house."

The general went to the carriage-house together with the officers.

"Shall I push it out a little? it is rather dark in here."

"That's enough, that's enough, that's right!"

The general and the officers stood round the carriage and carefully examined the wheels and the springs.

"Well, there is nothing special about it," said the general. "It is a most ordinary carriage."

"A very ugly one," said the colonel; "there is nothing good about it at all."

"I fancy, your Excellency, it is not worth four thousand," said the young officer.

"What?"

"I say, your Excellency, that I fancy it is not worth four thousand."

"Four thousand, indeed! why, it is not worth two, there is nothing in it at all. Perhaps there is something special about the inside. . . . Unbutton the leather, my dear fellow, please."

And what met the officer's eyes was Tchertokutsky sitting in his dressing-gown curled up in an extraordinary way. "Ah, you are here!" . . . said the astonished general.

Saying this he slammed the carriage door at once, covered Tchertokutsky with the apron again, and drove away with the officers.

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

THERE is nothing finer than the Nevsky Prospect, not in Petersburg anyway: it is the making of the city. What splendour does it lack, that fairest of our city thoroughfares? I know that no one among the poor clerks that live there would exchange the Nevsky Prospect for all the blessings of the world. Not only the young man of twenty-five summers with a fine moustache and a splendidly cut coat, but even the veteran with white hairs sprouting on his chin and a head as smooth as a silver dish is enthusiastic over the Nevsky Prospect. And the ladies! The Nevsky Prospect is even more attractive to the ladies. And indeed to whom is it not attractive? As soon as you step into the Nevsky Prospect you are in an atmosphere of gaiety. Though you may have some necessary and urgent work to do, yet as soon as you are there you forget all about business. This is the one place where people put in an appearance without necessity, without being driven there by the needs and commercial interests that swallow up all Petersburg. A man met in the Nevsky Prospect seems less of an egoist than in the other streets where covetousness, self-interest, and need are apparent in all who walk or drive along them. The Nevsky Prospect is the general channel of communication in Petersburg. The man who lives on the Petersburg or Viborg Side

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

who hasn't seen his friend at Pesky or at the Moscow Gate for years may reckon with certainty on meeting him in the Nevsky Prospect. No directory list at an Address Enquiry Office gives such accurate information as the Nevsky Prospect. All-powerful Nevsky Prospect! Sole place of entertainment for the poor man in Petersburg! How cleanly swept are its pavements, and, my God, how many feet leave their traces on it! The clumsy, dirty boots of the discharged soldier, under whose weight the very granite seems to crack, and the miniature, ethereal little shoes of the young lady who turns her head towards the glittering shop-windows as the sunflower to the sun, and the clanking sabre of the hopeful lieutenant which marks a sharp scratch along it—all print the scars of strength or weakness on it! What rapid transformation scenes pass over it in a single day! What changes it goes through between one dawn and the next! Let us begin with earliest morning when all Petersburg smells of hot, freshly-baked bread and is filled with old women in ragged gowns and pelisses who are making their raids on the churches and on compassionate passers-by. Then the Nevsky Prospect is empty: the stout shopkeepers and their assistants are still asleep in their linen shirts or washing their genteel cheeks and drinking their coffee; beggars gather near the doors of the confectioners' shops where the drowsy Ganymede who the day before flew round like a fly with chocolate, crawls out with no cravat on, broom in hand, and thrusts stale pies and scraps upon them. Working people move to and fro about the streets: sometimes peasants cross it, hurrying to their work, in high boots caked with mortar which even the Ekaterinsky canal,

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

famous for its cleanness, could not wash off. At this hour it is not proper for ladies to walk out, because Russian people like to explain their meaning in rude expressions such as they would not hear even in a theatre. Sometimes a drowsy government clerk trudges along with a portfolio under his arm, if the way to his department lies through the Nevsky Prospect. It may be confidently stated that at this period, that is, up to twelve o'clock, the Nevsky Prospect is for no man the goal, but simply the means of reaching it: it is filled with people who have their occupations, their anxieties, and their annoyances, and are thinking nothing about it. Peasants talk about ten kopecks or seven coppers, old men and women wave their hands or talk to themselves, sometimes with very striking gesticulations, but no one listens to them or laughs at them with the exception perhaps of street boys in homespun smocks, darting like lightning along the Nevsky Prospect with empty bottles or pairs of boots from the cobblers in their arms. At that hour you may put on what you like, and even if you wear a cap instead of a hat, or the ends of your collar stick out too far from your cravat, no one notices it.

At twelve o'clock tutors of all nationalities make a descent upon the Nevsky Prospect with their young charges in fine cambric collars. English Joneses and French Kocks walk arm in arm with the nurslings entrusted to their parental care, and with becoming dignity explain to them that the signboards over the shops are put there that people may know what is to be found within. Governesses, pale Misses, and rosy Mademoiselles, walk majestically behind their light and nimble charges, bidding them hold themselves

more upright or not drop their left shoulder; in short, at this hour the Nevsky Prospect plays its pedagogic part. But as two o'clock approaches, the governesses, tutors, and children are fewer; and finally are crowded out by their tender papas walking arm in arm with their gaudy, variegated, and hysterical spouses. Gradually these are joined by all who have finished their rather important domestic duties, such as talking to the doctor about the weather and the pimple that has come out on their nose, inquiring after the health of their horses and their promising and gifted children, reading in the newspaper a leading article and the announcements of the arrivals and departures, and finally drinking a cup of tea or coffee. They are joined, too, by those whose enviable destiny has called them to the blessed vocation of clerks on special commissions, and by those who serve in the Department of Foreign Affairs and are distinguished by the dignity of their pursuits and their habits. My God! What splendid positions and duties there are! How they elevate and sweeten the soul! But, alas, I am not in the service and am denied the pleasure of watching the refined behaviour of my superiors to me. Everything you meet on the Nevsky Prospect is brimming over with propriety: the men in long surtouts with their hands in their pockets, the ladies in pink, white, or pale blue satin redingotes and stylish hats. Here you meet unique whiskers, drooping with extraordinary and amazing elegance below the cravat, velvety, satiny whiskers, as black as sable or as coal, but alas! invariably the property of members of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Providence has denied black whiskers to clerks in other departments; they

are forced, to their great disgust, to wear red ones. Here you meet marvellous moustaches that no pen, no brush could do justice to, moustaches to which the better part of a life has been devoted, the objects of prolonged care by day and by night; moustaches upon which enchanting perfumes are sprinkled and on which the rarest and most expensive kinds of pomade are lavished; moustaches which are twisted up at night in thick curl-papers; moustaches to which their possessors display the most touching devotion and which are the envy of passers-by. Thousands of varieties of hats, dresses, and kerchiefs, flimsy and bright-coloured, for which their owners feel sometimes an adoration that lasts two whole days, dazzle every one on the Nevsky Prospect. A whole sea of butterflies seem to have flown up from their flower-stalks and to be floating in a glittering cloud above the beetles of the male sex. Here you meet waists of a slim delicacy beyond dreams of elegance, no thicker than a bottle-neck, and respectfully step aside for fear of a careless nudge with a discourteous elbow; your heart beats with apprehension lest from an incautious breath the exquisite product of art and nature may be snapped in two. And the ladies' sleeves that you meet on the Nevsky Prospect! Ah, how exquisite! They are like two air balloons and the lady might suddenly float up into the air, were she not held down by the gentleman accompanying her; for it would be as easy and agreeable for a lady to be lifted into the air as for a glass of champagne to be lifted to the lips. Nowhere do people bow with such dignity and ease as on the Nevsky Prospect. Here you meet with a unique smile, a smile that is the acme of art, that will sometimes melt

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

you with pleasure, sometimes make you bow your head and feel lower than the grass, sometimes make you hold it high and feel loftier than the Admiralty spire. Here you meet people conversing about a concert or the weather with extraordinary dignity and sense of their own consequence. Here you meet a thousand incredible types and figures. Good heavens! what strange characters are met on the Nevsky Prospect! There are numbers of people who, when they meet you, invariably stare at your boots, and when they have passed, turn round to have a look at the skirts of your coat. I have never been able to make out why it is. At first I thought they were bootmakers, but not a bit of it: they are for the most part clerks in various departments, many of them are very good at referring a case from one department to another; or they are people who spend their time walking about or reading the paper in restaurants—in fact they are usually very respectable people. In this blessed period between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, which might be called the moving centre of the Nevsky Prospect, there is a display of all the finest products of the wit of man. One exhibits a smart overcoat with the best beaver on it, the second—a lovely Greek nose, the third—superb whiskers, the fourth—a pair of pretty eyes and a marvellous hat, the fifth—a signet ring on a jaunty forefinger, the sixth—a foot in a bewitching shoe, the seventh—a cravat that excites wonder, and the eighth—a moustache that reduces one to stupefaction. But three o'clock strikes and the display is over, the crowd grows less dense. . . . At three o'clock there is a fresh change. Suddenly it is like spring on the Nevsky Prospect; it is

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

covered with government clerks in green uniforms. Hungry titular, lower court and other councillors do their best to quicken their pace. Young collegiate registrars and provincial and collegiate secretaries are in haste to be in time to parade the Nevsky Prospect with a dignified air, trying to look as if they had not been sitting for the last six hours in an office. But the elderly collegiate secretaries and titular and lower court councillors walk quickly with bowed heads: they are not disposed to amuse themselves by looking at the passers-by; they have not yet completely torn themselves away from their office cares; in their heads is a regular list of work begun and not yet finished; for a long time instead of the signboards they seem to see a cardboard rack of papers or the full face of the head of their office.

From four o'clock the Nevsky Prospect is empty, and you hardly meet a single government clerk. Some sewing-girl from a shop runs across the Nevsky Prospect with a box in her hands. Some luckless victim of a benevolent attorney, cast adrift in a frieze overcoat; an eccentric visitor to whom all hours are alike; a tall, lanky Englishwoman with a reticule and a book in her hand; a foreman in a high-waisted coat of cotton-shoddy with a narrow beard, a ramshackle figure. back, arms, head, and legs all twisting and turning as he walks deferentially along the pavement; sometimes a humble craftsman . . . those are all that we meet at that hour on the Nevsky Prospect.

But as soon as dusk descends upon the houses and streets and the watchman covered with a sack climbs up his ladder to light the lamp, and engravings which do not venture to show themselves by day peep out of

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

the lower windows of the shops, the Nevsky Prospect revives again and begins to be astir. Then comes that mysterious time when the street lamps throw a marvellous alluring light upon everything. You meet a great number of young men, for the most part bachelors, in warm surtouts and overcoats. There is a suggestion at this time of some object, or rather something like an object, something extremely unaccountable; the steps of all are more rapid and altogether very uneven; long shadows flit over the walls and pavement and almost reach the heads on the Police Bridge. Young collegiate registrars, provincial and collegiate secretaries walk up and down for hours, but the elderly collegiate registrars, the titular and lower court secretaries are for the most part at home, either because they are married, or because the German cook living in their house gives them a very good dinner. Here you may meet some of the respectable-looking old gentlemen who with such dignity and propriety walked on the Nevsky Prospect at two o'clock. You may see them racing along like the young government clerks to peep under the hat of some lady descried in the distance, whose thick lips and fat cheeks plastered with rouge are so attractive to many, and above all to the shopmen, workmen, and shopkeepers, who promenade in crowds, always in German coats, and usually arm in arm.

"Stay!" cried Lieutenant Pirogov on such an evening, nudging a young man who walked beside him in a dress-coat and cloak; "Did you see her?"

"I did; lovely, a perfect Bianca of Perugino."

"But which do you mean?"

"The lady with the dark hair. . . . And what eyes!

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

Good God, what eyes! Her whole attitude and shape and the lines of the face—— Exquisite!”

“I am talking of the fair girl who passed after her on the other side. Why don’t you go after the brunette if you find her so attractive?”

“Oh, how can you!” cried the young man in the dress-coat, turning crimson. “As though she were one of the women who walk the Nevsky Prospect at night. She must be a very distinguished lady,” he went on with a sigh, “why, her cloak alone is worth eighty roubles.”

“You simpleton!” cried Pirogov, giving him a violent shove in the direction in which the brilliant cloak was fluttering, “Go along, you ninny, why are you lingering? And I will follow the fair one.”

“We know what you all are,” Pirogov thought to himself with a self-satisfied and confident smile, convinced that no beauty could withstand him.

The young man in the dress-coat and the cloak with timid and tremulous step walked in the direction in which the bright coloured cloak was fluttering, at one moment shining brilliantly as it approached a street lamp, at the next shrouded in darkness as it moved further away. His heart throbbed and he unconsciously quickened his pace. He dared not even imagine that he could have a claim on the attention of the beauty who was retreating into the distance, and still less could he admit the evil thought suggested by Lieutenant Pirogov. All he wanted was to see the house, to discover where was the abode of this exquisite creature who seemed to have flown straight down from heaven on to the Nevsky Prospect, and who would probably fly away, no one could tell

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

whither. He darted along so fast that he was continually jostling dignified, grey-whiskered gentlemen off the pavement. This young man belonged to a class which is a great exception among us, and he no more belonged to the common run of Petersburg citizens than a face that appears to us in a dream belongs to the world of actual fact. This exceptional class is very rare in the town where all are officials, shopkeepers, or German craftsmen. He was an artist. A strange phenomenon, is it not? A Petersburg artist. An artist in the land of snows. An artist in the land of the Finns where everything is wet, flat, pale, grey, foggy! These artists are utterly unlike the Italian artists, proud and ardent as Italy and her skies. The Russian artist on the contrary is, as a rule, mild, gentle, retiring, careless, and quietly devoted to his art; he drinks tea with a couple of friends in his little room, modestly discusses his favourite subjects, and does not trouble his head at all about anything superfluous. He frequently engages some old beggar woman, and makes her sit for six hours on end in order to transfer to canvas her pitiful, almost inanimate countenance. He draws a sketch in perspective of his studio with all sorts of artistic litter lying about, copies plaster-of-Paris hands and feet, turned coffee-coloured by time and dust, a broken easel, a palette lying upside down, a friend playing the guitar, walls smeared with paint, with an open window through which there is a glimpse of the pale Neva and poor fishermen in red shirts. Almost all these artists paint in grey, muddy colours that bear the unmistakable imprint of the North. For all that, they all work with instinctive enjoyment. They are often endowed with

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

real talent, and if only they were breathing the fresh air of Italy, they would no doubt develop as freely, broadly, and brilliantly as a plant at last brought out from indoors into the open air. They are, as a rule, very timid; stars and thick epaulettes reduce them to such an embarrassment that they ask less for their pictures than they had intended. They are sometimes fond of dressing smartly, but anything smart they wear always looks too startling and rather like a patch. You sometimes meet them in an excellent coat and a muddy cloak, an expensive velvet waistcoat and a coat covered with paint, just as on one of their unfinished landscapes you sometimes see the head of a nymph, for which the artist could find no other place, sketched on the background of an earlier work at which he had once painted with enjoyment. Such an artist never looks you straight in the face; or, if he does look at you, it is with a vague, indefinite expression. He does not transfix you with the vulture-like eye of an observer or the hawk-like glance of a cavalry officer. This is because he sees at the same time your features and the features of some plaster-of-Paris Hercules standing in his room, or because he is imagining a picture which he dreams of producing later on. This makes him often answer incoherently, sometimes quite at random, and the muddle in his head increases his shyness. To this class belonged the young man we have described, an artist called Piskarev, retiring, shy, but bearing in his soul sparks of feeling, ready at a fitting opportunity to burst into flame. With a secret tremor he hastened after the lady who had made so strong an impression on him and seemed to be himself surprised at his audacity. The unknown be-

ing who had so captured his eyes, his thoughts, and his feelings suddenly turned her head and glanced at him.

Good God, what divine features! The dazzling whiteness of the exquisite brow was framed by hair lovely as an agate. They curled, those marvellous tresses, and some of them strayed below the hat and caressed the cheek, flushed by the chill of evening with a delicate fresh colour. A swarm of exquisite visions hovered about her lips. All the memories of childhood, all the visions that rise from dreaming and quiet inspiration in the lamplight—all seemed to be blended, mingled, and reflected on her harmonious lips. She glanced at Piskarev and his heart quivered at that glance; her glance was severe, a look of indignation came into her face at the sight of this impudent pursuit; but on that lovely face even wrath was bewitching. Overcome by shame and timidity he stood still, dropping his eyes: but how could he lose his divinity without even finding out the sanctuary in which she was enshrined? Such was the thought in the mind of the young dreamer, and he resolved to follow her. But, to avoid her notice, he fell back a good distance, looked carelessly from side to side and examined the sign-boards on the shops, at the same time he did not lose sight of a single step the unknown lady took. Passers-by were less frequent, the street became quieter. The beauty looked round and he fancied that her lips were curved in a faint smile. He was in a tremor all over and could not believe his eyes. No, it was the deceptive light of the street lamp which had thrown that semblance of a smile upon her lips; no, his own dreams were mocking him. But he held his breath

his life, to approach whose dwelling he looked upon as an unutterable bliss—could she have just been so gracious and attentive to him? He flew up the stairs. He was conscious of no earthly thought; he was not burning with the fire of earthly passion. No, at that moment he was pure and chaste as a virginal youth still aflame with the vague spiritual craving for love. And what would have awakened base thoughts in a dissolute man, in him made them still holier. This confidence, shown him by a weak and lovely creature, laid upon him the sacred duty of chivalrous austerity, the sacred duty to carry out all her commands. All that he desired was that those commands should be as difficult, as hard to carry out as possible, that with more effort he might fly to overcome all obstacles. He did not doubt that some mysterious and at the same time important circumstance compelled the unknown lady to confide in him; that she would certainly require some important service from him, and he felt in himself strength and resolution enough for anything.

The staircase went round and round, and his thoughts whirled round and round with it. "Be careful!" a voice rang out like a harpstring, sending a fresh thrill all through him. On the dark landing of the fourth storey the fair stranger knocked at a door; it was opened and they went in together. A woman of rather attractive appearance met them with a candle in her hand, but she looked so strangely and impudently at Piskarev that he dropped his eyes. They went into the room. Three female figures in different corners of the room met his eye. One was laying out cards; another was sitting at the piano and with two fingers strumming out a pitiful travesty of an old polo-

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

naise; the third was sitting before a looking-glass, combing out her long hair, and had apparently no intention of discontinuing her toilette on the arrival of an unknown visitor. An unpleasant untidiness, usually only seen in the neglected rooms of bachelors, was everywhere apparent. The furniture, which was fairly good, was covered with dust. Spiders' webs stretched over the carved cornice; through the open door of another room he caught the gleam of a spurred boot and the red edging of a uniform; a man's loud voice and a woman's laugh rang out without restraint.

Good God, where had he come! At first he would not believe it, and began looking more attentively at the objects that filled the room; but the bare walls and uncurtained windows betrayed the absence of a careful housewife; the faded faces of these pitiful creatures, one of whom was sitting just under his nose and staring at him as coolly as though he were a spot on some one's dress—all convinced him that he had come into one of those revolting dens in which the pitiful vice that springs from a tawdry education and the terrible over-population of a great town finds shelter, one of those dens in which man sacrilegiously tramples and derides all that is pure and holy, all that makes life fair, where woman, the beauty of the world, the crown of creation, is transformed into a strange, ambiguous creature, where she loses with purity of heart all that is womanly, revoltingly adopts the swagger and impudence of man, and ceases to be the delicate, the lovely creature, so different from us. Piskarev scanned her from head to foot with perplexed eyes, as though trying to make sure whether this was really she who had

so enchanted him and had brought him flying in from the Nevsky Prospect. But she stood before him lovely as ever; her eyes were even more heavenly. She was fresh, she was not more than seventeen; it could be seen that she had not long been in the grip of vice: it had as yet left no trace upon her cheeks, they were fresh and faintly flushed with colour; she was lovely.

He stood motionless before her and was ready to sink into the same simple-hearted forgetfulness as before. But the beauty was tired of this long silence and gave a meaning smile, looking straight into his eyes. That smile was full of a sort of pitiful insolence, it was so strange and as incongruous with her face as a sanctimonious air with the brutal face of a bribe-taker or a manual of bookkeeping with a poet. He shuddered. She opened her lovely lips and began saying something, but all she said was so stupid, so vulgar. . . . As though intelligence were lost with innocence! He wanted to hear no more. He was extremely absurd and simple as a child. Instead of taking advantage of such graciousness, instead of rejoicing in such a chance, as any one else in his place would probably have done, he rushed headlong away like a wild antelope and ran out into the street.

He sat in his room with his head bowed and his hands hanging loose, like a poor man who has found a precious pearl and at once dropped it into the sea. "Such a beauty, such divine features! And where? In such a place. . . ." That was all that he could articulate.

Nothing, indeed, moves us to such pity as the sight of beauty touched by the putrid breath of vice. Ugli-

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

ness may go with it, but beauty, tender beauty. . . In our thoughts it blends with nothing but purity and innocence. The beauty who had so enchanted poor Piskarev really was a rare and marvellous exception. Her presence in those vile surroundings seemed even more marvellous. All her features were so purely moulded, the whole expression of her lovely face wore the stamp of such nobility, that it was impossible to think that vice already held her in its clutches. She should have been the priceless pearl, the whole world, the paradise, the wealth of a devoted husband; she should have been the lovely, gentle star of some quiet family circle, and with the faintest movement of her lovely lips have given her sweet commands there. She would have been a divinity in the crowded drawing-room, on the shining parquet, in the glare of candles surrounded by the silent adoration of a crowd of admirers; but, alas! by some terrible machination of the fiendish spirit, eager to destroy the harmony of life, she had been flung with mocking laughter into this fearful slough.

Wrung by heart-rending pity, he sat on before a candle that was burnt low in the socket. Midnight was long past, the belfry chime rang out half-past twelve, and he sat on without stirring, neither asleep nor fully awake. Sleep, aided by his stillness, was beginning to steal over him, already the room was beginning to disappear, and only the light of the candle still shone through the dreams that were overpowering him, when all at once a knock at the door made him start and wake up. The door opened and a footman in gorgeous livery walked in. Never had a gorgeous livery peeped into his lonely room, and at such

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

an hour of the night! . . . He was amazed, and with impatient curiosity looked intently at the footman who entered.

"The lady," the footman pronounced with a deferential bow, "whom you visited some hours ago bade me invite you and sent the carriage to fetch you."

Piskarev stood in speechless wonder: the carriage, a footman in livery! . . . No, there must be some mistake. . . .

"My good man," he said timidly, "you must have come to the wrong door. Your mistress must have sent you for some one else and not for me."

"No, sir, I am not mistaken. Did you not accompany my mistress home? it's in Liteyny Street, on the fourth storey."

"I did."

"Then, if so, pray make haste; my mistress is very anxious to see you, and begs you to come straight to her house."

Piskarev ran down the stairs. A carriage was, in fact, standing in the courtyard. He got into it, the door was slammed, the cobbles of the pavement resounded under the wheels and the hoofs, and the illuminated perspective of houses with lamp-posts and signboards passed by the carriage windows. Piskarev pondered all the way and could not explain this adventure. A house of her own, a carriage, a footman in gorgeous livery. . . . He could not reconcile all this with the room on the fourth storey, the dusty windows, and the jangling piano. The carriage stopped before a brightly lighted entry, and he was at once struck by the procession of carriages, the talk of the coachmen, the brilliantly lighted windows, and

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

the strains of music. The footman in gorgeous livery helped him out of the carriage and respectfully led him into a hall with marble columns, with a porter in gold lace, with cloaks and fur coats flung here and there, and a brilliant lamp. An airy staircase with shining bannisters, fragrant with perfume, led upwards. He was already mounting it; hesitating at the first step and panic-stricken at the crowds of people, he went into the first room. The extraordinary brightness and variety of the scene completely staggered him; it seemed to him as though some demon had crumbled the whole world into bits and mixed all these bits indiscriminately together. The gleaming shoulders of the ladies and the black dress-coats, the lustres, the lamps, the ethereal floating gauze, the filmy ribbons, and the stout bassoon looking out from behind the railing of the orchestra—everything was dazzling to him. He saw at the same instant such numbers of venerable old or middle-aged men with stars on their evening-coats and ladies sitting in rows or stepping so lightly, proudly, and graciously over the parquet floor; he heard so many French and English words; moreover, the young men in black dress-coats were filled with such dignity, spoke or kept silence with such gentlemanly decorum, were so incapable of saying anything inappropriate, made jokes so majestically, smiled so politely, wore such superb whiskers, so skillfully displayed their elegant hands as they straightened their cravats, the ladies were so ethereal, so steeped in perfect gratification and beatitude, so enchantingly cast down their eyes, that . . . but Piskarev's subdued air, as he leaned timidly against a column, was enough to show that he was completely

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

overwhelmed. At that moment the crowd stood round a group of dancers. They whirled around, draped in the transparent creations of Paris, in garments woven of air itself; carelessly they touched the parquet floor with their gleaming feet, as ethereal as though they trod on air. But one among them was lovelier, more splendid, and more brilliantly dressed than the rest. An indescribable, subtle perfection of taste was apparent in all her attire, and at the same time it seemed as though she cared nothing for it, as though it had come unconsciously, of itself. She looked and did not look at the crowd of spectators crowding round her, she cast down her lovely long eyelashes indifferently, and the gleaming whiteness of her face was still more dazzling when she bent her head and a light shadow lay on her enchanting brow.

Piskarev did his utmost to make his way through the crowd and get a better look at her; but to his intense vexation a huge head of curly black hair was continually screening her from him; moreover, the crush was so great that he did not dare to press forward or to step back, for fear of jostling against some privy councillor. But at last he squeezed his way to the front and glanced at his clothes, anxious that everything should be neat. Heavenly Creator! What was his horror! he had on his everyday coat, and it was all smeared with paint; in his haste to set off, he had actually forgotten to change into suitable clothes. He blushed up to his ears and, dropping his eyes in confusion, would have gone away but there was absolutely nowhere he could go; kammer-junkers in gorgeous attire formed a compact wall behind

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

him. By now his desire was to be as far away as possible from the beauty of the lovely brows and eyelashes. In terror he raised his eyes to see whether she were looking at him. Good God! she stood facing him. . . . What did it mean? "It is she!" he cried almost at the top of his voice. It was really she—the one he had met on the Nevsky Prospect and had escorted home.

Meanwhile she lifted her eyelashes and looked at all with her clear eyes. "Aie, aie, aie, how beautiful! . . ." was all he could say with bated breath. She scanned the faces around her, all eager to catch her attention, but with an air of weariness and indifference she looked away and met Piskarev's eyes. Oh heavens! What paradise! Oh God, for strength to bear this! Life cannot contain it, such rapture tears it asunder and bears away the soul! She made a sign, but not by hand nor by inclination of the head; no, the sign was a look in her ravishing eyes so subtle, so imperceptible that no one else could see it, but he saw it, he understood it. The dance lasted long; the exhausted music seemed to flag and die away and again it broke out, shrilled and thundered; at last the dance was over. She sat down. Her panting bosom heaved under the light cloud of gossamer, her hand (Oh heavens! what a marvellous hand!) dropped on her knee, rested on her filmy gown which under it seemed breathing music, and its delicate lilac hue made that lovely hand look more dazzlingly white than ever. Only to touch it and nothing more! No other desires—they would be insolence. . . . He stood behind her chair, not daring to speak, not daring to breathe. "You have been dull?" she pronounced. "I have been dull

too. I see that you hate me. . . ." she added, drooping her long eyelashes.

"Hate you? I? . . . I? . . ." Piskarev, completely overwhelmed, tried to articulate, and he would probably have poured out a stream of incoherent words, but at that moment a kammer-junker with a magnificent curled shock of hair came up making witty and polite remarks. He rather agreeably displayed a row of rather good teeth, and at every jest his wit drove a sharp nail into Piskarev's heart. At last some one fortunately addressed the kammer-junker with a question.

"How unbearable it is!" she said, lifting her heavenly eyes to him. "I will sit at the other end of the room; be there!" She glided through the crowd and vanished. He pushed his way through the crowd like one possessed, and in a flash was there.

So this was she! She sat like a queen, finer than all, lovelier than all, and her eyes sought him.

"Are you here?" she asked softly. "I will be open with you: no doubt you think the circumstances of our meeting strange. Can you imagine that I belong to the degraded class of beings among whom you met me? You think my conduct strange, but I will reveal a secret to you. Can you promise never to betray it?" she pronounced, fixing her eyes upon him.

"Oh I will, I will, I will! . . ."

But at that moment an elderly man shook hands with her and began speaking in a language Piskarev did not understand. She looked at the artist with an imploring gaze, and signed to him to remain where he was and await her return: but in an access of impatience he could not obey a command even from her

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

lips. He followed her, but the crowd parted them. He could no longer see the lilac dress; in consternation he forced his way from room to room and elbowed all he met mercilessly, but in all the rooms gentlemen were sitting at whist plunged in dead silence. In a corner of the room some elderly people were arguing about the superiority of military to civil service; in another some young men in superb dress-coats were making a few light remarks about the voluminous works of a poet. Piskarev felt that a gentleman of venerable appearance had taken him by the button of his coat and was submitting some very just observation to his criticism, but he rudely thrust him aside without even noticing that he had a very distinguished order on his breast. He ran into another room—she was not there, into a third—she was not there either. “Where is she? Give her to me! Oh, I cannot live without another look at her! I want to hear what she meant to tell me!” But all his search was in vain. Anxious and exhausted, he huddled in a corner and looked at the crowd. But everything seemed blurred to his strained eyes. At last the walls of his own room began to grow distinct. He raised his eyes: before him stood a candlestick with the light flickering in the socket; the whole candle had burned away and the melted grease lay on his table.

So he had been asleep! My God, what a splendid dream! And why had he awakened? Why had it not lasted one minute longer? She would no doubt have appeared again! The unwelcome dawn was peeping in at his window with its unpleasant, dingy light. The room was in such a grey, untidy muddle. . . . Oh, how revolting was reality! What was it beside dreams?

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

He undressed quickly and got into bed, wrapping himself up in the coverlet, anxious to recapture the dream that had flown. Sleep certainly did not tarry, but it presented him with something quite different from what he wanted: at one time, Lieutenant Pirogov with his pipe, then the porter of the Academy, then an actual civil councillor, then the head of a Finnish woman who had sat to him for a portrait, and such foolish things.

He lay in bed till the middle of the day longing to dream again, but she did not appear. If only for one minute she had shown her lovely features, if only for one minute her light step had rustled, if only her hand, shining white as driven snow, had for one minute gleamed before him!

Dismissing everything, forgetting everything, he sat with a crushed and hopeless expression, full of nothing but his dream. He never thought of touching anything; his eyes were fixed in a vacant, lifeless stare upon the windows that looked into the yard, where a dirty water-carrier was slopping water that froze in the air, and the cracked voice of a pedlar bleated like a boat, "Old clothes for sale." The sounds of everyday reality rung strangely in his ears. So he sat on till evening and then flung himself eagerly into bed. For hours he struggled with sleeplessness; at last he overcame it. Again a dream, a vulgar, horrid dream. "God, have mercy! for one minute, just for one minute, let me see her!"

Again he waited for the evening, again he fell asleep. He dreamed of a government clerk who was at the same time a government clerk and a bassoon. Oh, this was insufferable! At last she appeared! Her

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

head and her curls . . . she gazed at him . . . for—oh, how brief a moment, and then again mist, again some stupid dream.

At last, dreaming became his life and from that time his life was strangely turned upside down; he might be said to sleep when he was awake and to come to life when he was asleep. Any one seeing him sitting dumbly before his empty table or walking along the street would certainly have taken him for a lunatic or a man deranged by drink: his eyes had a perfectly vacant look, his natural absent-mindedness developed and drove every sign of feeling and emotion out of his face. He only revived at the approach of night.

Such a condition destroyed his health, and the worst torture for him was the fact that sleep began to desert him altogether. Anxious to save the only treasure left him, he used every means to regain it. He had heard that there were means of inducing sleep—one need only take opium. But where could he get opium? He thought of a Persian who kept a shawl-shop and, whenever he saw Piskarev, asked him to paint a beautiful woman for him. He resolved to apply to him, assuming that he would be sure to have the drug he wanted.

The Persian received him, sitting on a sofa with his legs crossed under him. "What do you want opium for?" he asked.

Piskarev told him about his sleeplessness.

"Very well, you must paint me a beautiful woman, and I will give you opium. She must be a real beauty, let her eyebrows be black and her eyes be as big as olives; and let me be lying near her smoking my pipe. Do you hear, let her be pretty! Let her be a beauty!"

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

Piskarev promised everything. The Persian went out for a minute and came back with a little jar filled with a dark liquid; he carefully poured some of it into another jar and gave it to Piskarev, telling him to take not more than seven drops in water. He greedily clutched the precious little jar, with which he would not have parted for a pile of gold, and ran headlong home.

When he got home he poured several drops into a glass of water and, swallowing it, lay down to sleep.

Oh God, what joy! She! She again, but now in quite a different world! Oh, how charmingly she sat at the window of a bright little country house! In her dress was the simplicity in which the poet's thought is clothed. And her hair! Merciful heavens! how simple it was and how it suited her. A short shawl was thrown lightly around her graceful throat; everything about her was modest, everything about her showed a mysterious, inexplicable sense of taste. How charming her graceful carriage! How musical the sound of her steps and the rustle of her simple gown! How lovely her hand, clasped by a hair bracelet! She said to him with a tear in her eye: "Don't look down upon me; I am not at all what you take me for. Look at me, look at me more carefully and tell me: am I capable of what you imagine?" "Oh no, no! May he who should dare to think it, may he . . ."

But he awoke, deeply moved, harassed, with tears in his eyes. "Better that you had not existed! had not lived in this world, but had been an artist's creation! I would never have left the canvas, I would have gazed at you for ever and kissed you! I would have lived and breathed in you, as in the loveliest of

dreams, and then I should have been happy. I should have desired nothing more, I would have called upon you as my guardian angel at sleeping and at waking, and I would have gazed on you, if ever I had to paint the divine and holy. But as it is . . . how terrible life is! What good is it that she lives? Does a madman's life rejoice his friends and family who once loved him? My God! what is our life! an everlasting disharmony between dream and reality!" Such ideas absorbed him continually. He thought of nothing, he almost gave up eating, indeed, and with the impatience and passion of a lover waited for the evening and his coveted dreams. The continual concentration of his thoughts on one subject at last so completely mastered his whole being and imagination that the coveted image appeared before him almost every day always in positions that were the very opposite of reality, for his thoughts were as pure as a child's. Through these dreams, the subject of them became in his imagination more pure and was completely transformed.

The opium inflamed his thoughts more than ever, and if there ever was a man passionately, terribly, and ruinously in love to the utmost pitch of madness he was that luckless man.

Of his dreams one rejoiced him more than any: he saw himself in his studio. He was in good spirits and sitting happily with the palette in his hand! And she was there. She was his wife. She sat beside him leaning her lovely elbow on the back of his chair and looking at his work. Her eyes were languid and weary with excess of bliss; everything in his room breathed of paradise; it was so bright, so neat. Good God! she leaned her lovely head on his bosom. . . .

He had never had a better dream than that. He rose after it fresher, less absent-minded than before. A strange idea came into his mind. "Perhaps," he thought, "she has been drawn into vice by some awful chance, through no will of her own, perhaps her soul is disposed to penitence; perhaps she herself is longing to escape from her awful position. And am I to stand aside indifferently and let her go to ruin when I have only to hold out a hand to save her from drowning?" His thoughts carried him further. "No one knows me," he said to himself, "and no one cares what I do, and I have nothing to do with any one either. If she shows herself genuinely penitent and changes her mode of life, I will marry her. I ought to marry her, and no doubt I should do much better than many who marry their housekeepers or sometimes the most contemptible creatures. But my action will be disinterested and very likely a good deed. I shall restore to the world the loveliest of its ornaments!"

Making this light-hearted plan, he felt the colour flushing in his cheek; he went up to the looking-glass and was frightened at his hollow cheeks and the paleness of his face. He began carefully dressing; he washed, smoothed his hair, put on a new coat, a smart waistcoat, flung on his cloak, and went out into the street. He breathed the fresh air and had a feeling of freshness in his heart, like a convalescent who has gone out for the first time after a long illness. His heart throbbed when he turned into the street which he had not passed through again since that fatal meeting.

He was a long time looking for the house. He walked up and down the street twice, uncertain before which to stop. At last one of them seemed to him

like it. He ran quickly up the stairs and knocked at the door: the door opened and who came out to meet him? His ideal, his mysterious divinity, the original of his dream pictures—she who was his life, in whom he lived so terribly, so agonizingly, so blissfully—she, she herself, stood before him! He trembled; he could hardly stand on his feet for weakness, overcome by the rush of joy. She stood before him as lovely as ever, though her eyes looked sleepy, though a pallor had crept over her face, no longer quite so fresh; but still she was lovely.

“Ah!” she cried on seeing Piskarev and rubbing her eyes (it was two o’clock in the afternoon); “why did you run away from us that day?”

He sat down in a chair, feeling faint, and looked at her.

“And I am only just awake; I was brought home at seven in the morning. I was quite drunk,” she added with a smile.

Oh, better you had been dumb and could not speak at all than uttering such words! She had shown him in a flash the whole panorama of her life. But, in spite of that, struggling with his feelings, he made up his mind to try whether his representations would have any effect on her. Pulling himself together, he began in a shaking but ardent voice depicting her awful position. She listened to him with a look of attention and with the feeling of wonder which we display at the insight of something strange and unexpected. She looked with a faint smile towards her friend who was sitting in a corner, and who left off cleaning a comb and also listened with attention to this new preacher.

"It is true that I am poor," said Piskarev, at last, after a prolonged and persuasive appeal, "but we will work, we will do our best, side by side, to improve our position. Yes, nothing is sweeter than to owe everything to one's own work. I will sit at my pictures, you shall sit by me and inspire my work, while you are busy with sewing or some other handicraft, and we shall not need for anything."

"Indeed!" she interrupted his speech with an expression of some scorn. "I am not a washer-woman or a sempstress that I should have to work."

Oh God! in those words the whole of a mean, degraded life was portrayed, the life of the true followers of vice, full of emptiness and idleness!

"Marry me!" her friend who had till then sat silent in the corner put in, with a saucy air. "When I am your wife I will sit like this!" As she spoke she pursed up her pitiful face and assumed a silly expression, which greatly diverted the beauty.

Oh, that was too much! That was more than he could bear! He rushed away with every thought and feeling in a turmoil. His mind was clouded: stupidly, aimlessly, he wandered about all day, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, feeling nothing. No one could say whether he slept anywhere or not; only next day, by some blind instinct, he found his way to his room, pale and terrible-looking, with his hair dishevelled and signs of madness in his face. He locked himself in his room and admitted no one, asked for nothing. Four days passed and his door was not once opened; at last a week had passed, and still the door was locked. People went to the door and began calling him, but there was no answer; at last the door was broken open

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

and his lifeless corpse was found with the throat cut. A bloodstained razor lay on the floor. From his arms flung out convulsively and his terribly distorted face, it might be concluded that his hand had faltered and that he had suffered in agony before his soul left his sinful body.

So perished the victim of a frantic passion, poor Piskarev, the gentle, timid, modest, childishly simple-hearted artist whose spark of talent might with time have glowed into the full bright flame of genius. No one wept for him; no one was seen beside his dead body except the regulation police superintendent and the indifferent face of the town doctor. His coffin was taken to Ohta quickly, without even the rites of religion; only a soldier-watchman who followed it wept, and that simply because he had had a glass too much of vodka. Even Lieutenant Pirogov did not come to look at the dead body of the poor luckless artist to whom he had extended his exalted patronage. He had no thoughts to spare for him; indeed, he was absorbed in a very exciting adventure. But let us turn to him. I do not like corpses, and it is always disagreeable to me when a long funeral procession crosses my path and some veteran dressed in a sort of capuchin takes a pinch of snuff with his left hand because he has a torch in his right. I always feel annoyed at the sight of a magnificent catafalque with a velvet pall; but my annoyance is mingled with sadness when I see a cart dragging the red, uncovered coffin of some poor fellow and only some old beggar woman who has met it at the crossways follows it weeping, because she has nothing else to do.

I believe we left Lieutenant Pirogov at the moment

when he parted with Piskarev and went in pursuit of the fair-haired charmer. The latter was a lively, rather attractive little creature. She stopped before every shop and gazed at the sashes, kerchiefs, earrings, gloves, and other trifles in the shop-windows, was continually twisting and turning and gazing about her in all directions and looking behind her. "You'll be mine, you darling!" Pirogov said confidently, as he pursued her, turning up the collar of his coat for fear of meeting some one of his acquaintance. It will be as well, however, to let the reader know what sort of person Lieutenant Pirogov was.

But before we describe Lieutenant Pirogov, it will be as well to say something of the circle to which Lieutenant Pirogov belonged. There are officers who form a kind of middle class in Petersburg. You will always find one of them at every evening party, at every dinner given by a civil councillor or an actual civil councillor who has risen to that grade by forty years of service. The group of pale daughters, as colourless as Petersburg, some of them no longer in their first youth, the tea-table, the piano, the impromptu dance, are all inseparable from the gay epaulette which gleams in the lamplight between the virtuous young lady and the black coat of her brother or of some old friend of the family. It is extremely difficult to arouse and divert these phlegmatic misses. To do so needs a great deal of skill, or rather perhaps the absence of all skill. One has to say what is not too clever or too amusing and to bring in the trivialities that women love. One must give credit for that to the gentlemen we are discussing. They have a special gift for making these colourless beauties laugh and listen. Exclamations, smothered in

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

laughter, of "Oh, do stop! Aren't you ashamed to be so absurd!" are often their highest reward. They rarely, one may say never, get into higher circles: from those regions they are completely crowded out by the so-called aristocrats. At the same time, they pass for well-bred, highly educated men. They are fond of talking about literature; praise Bulgarin, Pushkin, and Gretch, and speak with contempt and witty sarcasm of A. A. Orlov. They never miss a public lecture, though it may be on book-keeping or even forestry. You will always find one of them at the theatre, whatever the play, unless, indeed, it be one of the farces of the "Filatka" class, which greatly offend their fastidious taste. They are priceless at the theatre and the greatest asset to managers. They are particularly fond of fine verses in a play, and they are greatly given to calling loudly for the actors; many of them, by teaching in government establishments or preparing pupils for them, arrive at keeping a carriage and pair. Then their circle becomes wider and in the end they succeed in marrying a merchant's daughter who can play the piano, with a dowry of a hundred thousand, or something near it, in cash, and a lot of bearded relations. They can never attain to this honour, however, till they have reached the rank of colonel, at least, for Russian merchants, though there may still be a smell of cabbage about them, will never consent to see their daughters married to any but generals or colonels at the lowest. Such are the leading characteristics of this class of young men. But Lieutenant Pirogov had a number of talents belonging to him individually. He recited verses from "Dimitry Donsky" and "Woe from Wit" with great effect, and possessed the art of

blowing smoke out of a pipe in rings so successfully that he could string a dozen of them together in a chain; he could tell a very good story to the effect that a cannon was one thing and a unicorn was another. It is difficult to enumerate all the qualities with which fate had endowed Pirogov. He was fond of talking about actresses and dancers, but not quite in such a crude way as young lieutenants commonly hold forth on that subject. He was very much pleased with his rank in the service, to which he had only lately been promoted, and although he did occasionally say as he lay on the sofa: "O dear, vanity, all is vanity. What if I am a lieutenant?" yet his vanity was secretly much flattered by his new dignity; he often tried in conversation to allude to it in a roundabout way, and on one occasion when he jostled against a copying clerk in the street who struck him as uncivil he promptly stopped him and in few but vigorous words pointed out to him that there was a lieutenant standing before him and not any other kind of officer. He was the more eloquent in his observations as two very nice-looking ladies were passing at the moment. Pirogov displayed a passion for everything artistic in general and encouraged the artist Piskarev; this may have been partly due to a desire to see his manly countenance portrayed on canvas. But enough of Pirogov's good qualities. Man is such a strange creature that one can never enumerate all his good points, and the more we look into him the more new characteristics we discover and the description of them would be endless. And so Pirogov continued to pursue the unknown fair one, from time to time he addressed her with questions to which she responded infrequently with abrupt

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

and incoherent sounds. They passed by the wet Kazan gate into Myeshchansky Street—a street of tobacco-nists and little shops, of German artisans and Finnish nymphs. The fair lady ran faster than ever, and scurried in at the gate of a rather dirty-looking house. Pirogov followed her. She ran up a narrow, dark staircase and went in at a door through which Pirogov boldly followed her. He found himself in a big room with black walls and a grimy ceiling. A heap of iron screws, locksmith's tools, shining tin coffee-pots and candlesticks lay on the table; the floor was littered with brass and iron filings. Pirogov saw at once that this was a workman's lodging. The unknown charmer darted away through a side-door. He hesitated for a minute, but, following the Russian rule, decided to push forward. He went into the other room, which was quite unlike the first and very neatly furnished, showing that it was inhabited by a German. He was struck by an extremely strange sight: before him sat Schiller. Not the Schiller who wrote *William Tell* and the *History of the Thirty Years' War*, but the famous Schiller the ironmonger and tinsmith of Myeshchansky Street. Beside Schiller stood Hoffmann—not the writer Hoffmann, but a rather high-class boot-maker who lived in Ofitsersky Street and was a great friend of Schiller's. Schiller was drunk and was sitting on a chair, stamping and saying something with heat. All this would not have surprised Pirogov, but what did surprise him was the extraordinary attitude of the two figures. Schiller was sitting with his head flung up and his rather thick nose in the air, while Hoffmann was holding the nose between his finger and thumb and was brandishing the

blade of his cobbler's knife over its very surface. Both individuals were talking in German, and so Lieutenant Pirogov, whose knowledge of German was confined to "Gut Morgen" could not make out what was going on. However, what Schiller said amounted to this: "I don't want it, I have no need of a nose!" he said, waving his hands, "I use three pounds of snuff a month on my nose alone. And I pay in a nasty Russian shop, for a German shop does not keep Russian snuff. I pay in a nasty Russian shop forty kopecks a pound—that makes one rouble twenty kopecks, twelve times one rouble twenty kopecks—that makes fourteen roubles forty kopecks. Do you hear, friend Hoffmann? Fourteen roubles forty kopecks on my nose alone! And on holidays I take a pinch of rappee, for I don't care to use nasty Russian snuff on a holiday. In the year I use two pounds of rappee at two roubles the pound. Six and fourteen makes twenty roubles forty kopecks on snuff alone. It's a robbery. I ask you, my friend Hoffmann, isn't it?" Hoffmann, who was drunk himself, answered in the affirmative. "Twenty roubles and forty kopecks. I am a Swabian; we have a king in Germany. I don't want a nose! Cut off my nose! Here is my nose."

And had it not been for Lieutenant Pirogov's suddenly appearing, Hoffmann would certainly, for no rhyme or reason, have cut off Schiller's nose, for he already had his knife in position, as though he were going to cut a sole.

Schiller seemed very much annoyed that an unknown and uninvited person should so inopportunistically interrupt him. Although he was in a state of intoxication, he felt that it was rather improper to be seen

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

in the presence of an outsider in such a state and engaged in such proceedings. Meanwhile Pirogov made a slight bow and, with his characteristic agreeableness, said: "Excuse me . . . !"

"Be off!" Schiller responded emphatically.

Lieutenant Pirogov was taken aback at this. Such treatment was absolutely new to him. A smile which had begun faintly to appear on his face vanished at once. With a feeling of wounded dignity he said: "I am surprised, sir. . . . I suppose you have not observed . . . I am an officer. . . ."

"And what's an officer? I'm a Swabian. Myself" (at this Schiller banged the table with his fist) "will be an officer; a year and a half a junker, two years a lieutenant, and to-morrow I shall be an officer at once. But I don't want to serve. This is what I'd do to officers: phoo!" Schiller held his open hand before him and spat into it.

Lieutenant Pirogov saw that there was nothing for him to do but retire. Such a proceeding, however, was quite out of keeping with his rank, and was disagreeable to him. He stood still several times on the stairs as though trying to rally his forces and to think how to make Schiller feel his impudence. At last he decided that Schiller might be excused because his head was fuddled with wine and beer; besides, he recalled the image of the charming blonde, and he made up his mind to consign it to oblivion.

Early next morning Lieutenant Pirogov appeared at the tinsmith's workshop. In the outer room he was met by the fair-haired charmer, who asked him in a rather austere voice, which went admirably with her little face: "What do you want?"

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

"Oh, good morning, my pretty dear! Don't you recognise me? You little rogue, what charming eyes!"

As he said this Lieutenant Pirogov tried very charmingly to chuck her under the chin; but the lady uttered a frightened exclamation and with the same austerity asked: "What do you want?"

"To see you, that's all that I want," answered Lieutenant Pirogov, smiling rather agreeably and going nearer; but noticing that the timorous beauty was about to slip through the door, he added: "I want to order some spurs, my dear. Can you make me some spurs? Though indeed no spur is needed to make me love you, a curb is what one needs, not a spur. What charming little hands!"

Lieutenant Pirogov was particularly agreeable in declarations of this kind.

"I will call my husband at once," cried the German, and went out and within a few minutes Pirogov saw Schiller come in with sleepy-looking eyes; he had only just woken up after the drunkenness of the previous day. As he looked at the officer he remembered as though in a confused dream what had happened the previous day. He could recall nothing exactly as it was, but felt that he had done something stupid and so received the officer with a very sullen face. "I can't ask less than fifteen roubles for a pair of spurs," he brought out, hoping to get rid of Pirogov, for as a respectable German he was ashamed to look at any one who had seen him in an unseemly condition. Schiller liked to drink without spectators, in company with two or three friends, and at such times locked himself in and would not admit even his own workman.

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

"Why are they so expensive?" asked Pirogov, genially.

"German work," Schiller pronounced coolly, stroking his chin; "a Russian will undertake to make them for two roubles."

"Well, to show you that I like you and should be glad to make your acquaintance, I will pay fifteen roubles."

Schiller remained for a minute pondering; as a respectable German he felt a little ashamed. Hoping to put him off the order, he declared that he could not undertake it for a fortnight. But Pirogov, without making any objections, readily assented to this.

The German mused and began pondering how he could best do the work so as to make it really worth fifteen roubles.

At this moment the blonde charmer came into the room and began looking for something on the table, which was covered with coffee-pots. The lieutenant took advantage of Schiller's absorption, stepped up to her and pressed her arm, which was bare to the shoulder.

This was very distasteful to Schiller. "Meine Frau!" he cried.

"Was wollen Sie doch?" answered the fair charmer.

"Gehen Sie to the kitchen!" The lady withdrew.

"In a fortnight then?" said Pirogov.

"Yes, in a fortnight," replied Schiller, still pondering. "I have a lot of work now."

"Good-bye for the present, I will look in again."

"Good-bye," said Schiller, closing the door after him.

Lieutenant Pirogov made up his mind not to relinquish his pursuit, though the lady had so plainly re-

buffed him. He could not conceive that any one could resist him, especially as his politeness and the brilliant rank of a lieutenant gave him a full claim to attention. It must be mentioned also that with all her attractiveness Schiller's wife was extremely stupid. Stupidity, however, adds a special charm to a pretty wife. I have known several husbands, anyway, who were in raptures over the stupidity of their wives and saw in it evidence of childlike innocence. Beauty works perfect miracles. All spiritual defects in a beauty, far from exciting repulsion, become somehow wonderfully attractive, even vice has an aroma of charm in the beautiful; but when beauty disappears, a woman needs to be twenty times as intelligent as a man merely to inspire respect, to say nothing of love. Schiller's wife, however, for all her stupidity was always faithful to her duties, and consequently it was no easy task for Pirogov to succeed in his bold enterprise. But there is always a pleasure in overcoming difficulties, and the fair lady became more and more attractive in his eyes every day. He took to enquiring pretty frequently about the progress of the spurs, so that at last Schiller was weary of it. He did his utmost to finish the spurs quickly; at last they were done.

"Oh, what splendid workmanship," cried Lieutenant Pirogov on seeing the spurs. "Good Heavens, how well it's done! Our general hasn't spurs like that."

A feeling of self-complacency filled Schiller's soul. His eyes began to look fairly good-humoured, and he felt inwardly reconciled to Pirogov. "The Russian officer is an intelligent man," he thought to himself.

"So, then, you could make a sheath for a dagger or for anything else?"

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

"Indeed I can," said Schiller with a smile.

"Then make me a sheath for a dagger. I will bring it you. I have a very fine Turkish dagger, but I should like to have another sheath for it."

This was like a bomb dropped upon Schiller. His brows were suddenly knitted.

"So that's what you are after," he thought to himself, inwardly swearing at himself for having praised his own work. To refuse it now he felt would be dishonest; besides, the Russian officer had praised his workmanship. Slightly shaking his head, he gave his consent; but the kiss which Pirogov as he went out impudently printed on the lips of the pretty wife reduced the tin-smith to stupefaction.

I think it will not be superfluous to make the reader better acquainted with Schiller himself. Schiller was a regular German in the full significance of the word. From the age of twenty, that happy time when the Russian lives without a thought of the morrow, Schiller had already mapped out his whole life and did not deviate from his plan under any circumstances. He made it a rule to get up at seven, to dine at two, to be punctual in everything, and to get drunk every Sunday. He set before himself as an object to save a capital of fifty thousand in the course of ten years, and all this was as certain and as unalterable as fate, for sooner would a government clerk forget to look in at the porter's lodge of his chief than a German would bring himself to break his word. Never under any circumstances did he increase his expenses, and if the price of potatoes went up much above the ordinary he did not spend one halfpenny more on them but simply diminished the amount they consumed, and although he was left some-

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

times feeling rather hungry, he soon got used to it. His exactitude was such that he made it his rule to kiss his wife twice in the twenty-four hours but not more, and that he might not exceed the number he never put more than one small teaspoonful of pepper in his soup; on Sunday, however, this rule was not so strictly kept, for then Schiller used to drink two bottles of beer and one bottle of herb-flavored vodka which, however, he always abused. He did not drink like an Englishman, who locks his doors directly after dinner and gets drunk in solitude. On the contrary, like a German he always drank with inspiration either in the company of Hoffmann the bootmaker or with Kunts the carpenter, who was also a German and a great drunkard. Such was the disposition of the worthy Schiller, who was indeed placed in a very difficult position. Though he was phlegmatic and a German, Pirogov's behaviour excited in him a feeling akin to jealousy. He racked his brains and could not think how to get rid of this Russian officer. Meanwhile Pirogov, smoking a pipe in the company of his brother officers—since Providence has ordained that wherever there is an officer there is a pipe—alluded significantly and with an agreeable smile on his lips to his little intrigue with the pretty German, with whom he was, according to his account, already on the best of terms, though as a matter of fact he had almost lost all hope of winning her favour.

One day he was walking along Myeshtchansky Street looking at the house adorned by Schiller's sign-board with coffee-pots and samovars on it; to his great joy he caught sight of the fair charmer's head thrust out of the window watching the passers-by. He stopped, kissed his hand to her and said: "Gut Mor-

gen." The fair lady bowed to him as to an acquaintance.

"I say, is your husband at home?"

"Yes," she answered.

"And when is he out?"

"He is not at home on Sundays," said the foolish little German.

"That's not bad," Pirogov thought to himself. "I must take advantage of that."

And the following Sunday he suddenly and unexpectedly stood facing the fair German. Schiller really was not at home. The pretty wife was frightened; but Pirogov on this occasion behaved rather warily, he was very respectful in his manner, and, making his bows, displayed all the elegance of his supple figure in his close-fitting uniform. He made polite and agreeable jests, but the silly little German responded with nothing but monosyllables. At last, having made his attack from all sides and seeing that nothing would entertain her, he suggested that they should dance. The German agreed in a trice, for all the German girls are passionately fond of dancing. Pirogov rested great hopes upon this: in the first place it gave her pleasure, in the second place it displayed his figure and dexterity; and thirdly he could get so much closer to her in dancing and put his arm around the pretty German and lay the foundation for everything else; in short, he reckoned on complete success resulting from it. He began humming a gavotte, knowing that Germans must have something sedate. The pretty German walked into the middle of the room and lifted her shapely foot. This attitude so enchanted Pirogov that he flew to kiss her. The lady began to scream, and this only enhanced her

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

charm in Pirogov's eyes. He was showering kisses on her when the door suddenly opened and Schiller walked in, together with Hoffmann and Kunts the carpenter. All these worthy persons were as drunk as cobblers.

But . . . I leave the reader to imagine the wrath and indignation of Schiller.

"Ruffian!" he shouted in the utmost indignation. "How dare you kiss my wife? You are a scoundrel and not a Russian officer. The devil take you! that's right, isn't it, friend Hoffmann? I am a German and not a Russian swine." (Hoffmann gave him an affirmative answer.) "Oh, I don't want to be made a fool of! Take him by the collar, friend Hoffmann; I won't have it," he went on, brandishing his arms violently, while his whole face was the colour of his red waistcoat. "I have been living in Petersburg for eight years, I have a mother in Swabia and an uncle in Nuremburg, I am a German and not a horned ox. Away with him altogether, my friend Hoffmann. Hold him by his arms and his legs, comrade Kunts!"

And the Germans seized Pirogov by his arms and his legs.

He tried in vain to get away; these three tradesmen were among the sturdiest people in Petersburg, and they treated him so roughly and disrespectfully that I cannot find words to do justice to the melancholy incident.

I am sure that next day Schiller was in a perfect fever, that he was trembling like a leaf, expecting from moment to moment the arrival of the police, that he would have given anything in the world for what had happened on the previous day to be a dream. But what has been cannot be changed. No comparison

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

could do justice to Pirogov's anger and indignation. The very thought of such an insult drove him to fury. He thought Siberia and the lash too slight a punishment for Schiller. He flew home to dress himself and go at once straight to the general to paint to him in the most vivid colours the seditious insolence of the Germans. He meant to lodge a complaint in writing with the general staff; and, if the punishment meted out to the offenders was not satisfactory, to carry the matter to higher authorities.

But all this ended rather strangely; on the way he went into a café, ate two jam puffs, read something out of *The Northern Bee* and left the café with his wrath somewhat cooled. Then a pleasant fresh evening led him to take a few turns along the Nevsky Prospect; by nine o'clock he had recovered his serenity and decided that he had better not disturb the general on Sunday; especially as he would be sure to be away somewhere. And so he went to spend the evening with one of the directors of the control committee, where he met a very agreeable party of government officials and officers of his regiment. There he spent a very pleasant evening, and so distinguished himself in the mazurka that not only the ladies but even their partners were moved to admiration.

"Marvellously is our world arranged," I thought as I walked two days later along the Nevsky Prospect, and mused over these two incidents. "How strangely, how unaccountably Fate plays with us! Do we ever get what we desire? Do we ever attain what our powers seem specially fitted for? Everything goes by contraries. Fate gives splendid horses to one man and he drives in his carriage without noticing their beauty,

while another who is consumed by a passion for horses has to go on foot, and all the satisfaction he gets is clicking with his tongue when trotting horses are led past him. One has an excellent cook, but unluckily so small a mouth that he cannot take more than two tiny bits; another has a mouth as big as the arch of the Staff headquarters, but alas has to be content with a German dinner of potatoes. What strange pranks Fate plays with us!"

But strangest of all are the incidents that take place in the Nevsky Prospect. Oh, do not trust that Nevsky Prospect! I always wrap myself more closely in my cloak when I pass along it and try not to look at the objects which meet me. Everything is a cheat, everything is a dream, everything is other than it seems! You think that the gentleman who walks along in a splendidly cut coat is very wealthy?—not a bit of it. All his wealth lies in his coat. You think that those two stout men who stand facing the church that is being built are criticising its architecture?—not at all; they are saying how queerly two crows are sitting opposite each other. You think that that enthusiast waving his arms about is describing how his wife was playing ball out of window with an officer who was a complete stranger to him?—not so at all, he is talking of Lafayette. You imagine those ladies . . . but ladies are least of all to be trusted. Do not look into the shop windows, the trifles exhibited in them are delightful but they are suggestive of a fearful pile of notes. But God preserve you from peeping under the ladies' hats! However attractively in the evening a fair lady's cloak may flutter in the distance, nothing would induce me to follow her and try to get a closer view. Keep your

THE NEVSKY PROSPECT

distance, for God's sake, keep your distance from the lamp-post! and pass by it quickly, as quickly as you can! It is a happy escape if you get off with nothing worse than some of its stinking oil on your foppish coat. But, apart from the lamp-post, everything breathes deception. It deceives at all hours, the Nevsky Prospect does, but most of all when night falls in masses of shadow on it, throwing into relief the white and dun-coloured walls of the houses, when all the town is transformed into noise and brilliance, when myriads of carriages roll over bridges, postilions shout and jolt up and down on their horses, and when the demon himself lights the street lamps to show everything in false colours.

A MADMAN'S DIARY

A MADMAN'S DIARY

October 3.

TO-DAY an extraordinary event occurred. I got up rather late in the morning, and when Mavra brought me my cleaned boots I asked her the time. Hearing that it was long past ten I made haste to dress. I own I wouldn't have gone to the department at all, knowing the sour face the chief of our section will make me. For a long time past he has been saying to me: "How is it, my man, your head always seems in a muddle? Sometimes you rush about as though you were crazy and do your work so that the devil himself could not make head or tail of it, you write the title with a small letter, and you don't put in the date or the number." The damned heron! To be sure he is jealous because I sit in the director's room and mend pens for his Excellency. In short I wouldn't have gone to the department if I had not hoped to see the counting-house clerk and to find out whether maybe I could not get something of my month's salary in advance out of that wretched Jew. That's another creature! Do you suppose he would ever let one have a month's pay in advance? Good gracious! the heavens would fall before he'd do it! You may ask till you burst, you may be at your last farthing, but the grey-headed devil won't let you have it—and when he is at home his own cook slaps him in the face;

A MADMAN'S DIARY

everybody knows it. I can't see the advantage of serving in a department; there are absolutely no possibilities in it. In the provincial government, or in the civil and crown offices, it's quite a different matter: there you may see some wretched man squeezed into the corner, copying away, with a nasty old coat on and such a face that it nearly makes you sick, but look what a villa he takes! It's no use offering him a gilt china cup: "That's a doctor's present," he will say. You must give him a pair of trotting horses or a droshky or a beaver fur worth three hundred roubles. He is such a quiet fellow to look at, and says in such a refined way: "Oblige me with a pen-knife just to mend a pen," but he fleeces the petitioners so that he scarcely leaves them a shirt to their backs. It is true that ours is a gentlemanly office, there is a cleanliness in everything such as is never seen in provincial offices, the tables are mahogany and all the heads address you formally. . . . I must confess that if it were not for the gentlemanliness of the service I should have left the department long ago.

I put on my old greatcoat and took my umbrella, as it was raining in torrents. There was no one in the streets; some women pulling their skirts up to cover themselves, and some Russian merchants under umbrellas and some messengers met my eye. I saw none of the better class except one of ourselves. I saw him at the cross-roads. As soon as I saw him I said to myself: "No, my dear man, you are not on your way to the department; you are running after that girl who is racing ahead and looking at her feet." What sad dogs clerks are! Upon my soul, they are as bad as any officer: if any female goes by in a hat they are

A MADMAN'S DIARY

bound to be after her. While I was making this reflection I saw a carriage driving up to the shop which I was passing. I recognised it at once. It was our director's carriage. "But he can have nothing to go to the shop for," I thought; "I suppose it must be his daughter." I flattened myself against the wall. The footman opened the carriage door and she darted out like a bird. How she glanced from right to left, how her eyes and eyebrows gleamed. . . . Good God, I am done for, done for utterly! And why does she drive out in such rain! Don't tell me that women have not a passion for all this frippery. She didn't know me, and, indeed, I tried to muffle myself up all I could, because I had on a very muddy greatcoat of an old-fashioned cut. Now people wear cloaks with long collars while I had short collars one above the other, and, indeed, the cloth was not at all rainproof. Her little dog, who had been too late to dash in at the door, was left in the street. I know the dog—her name is Madgie. I had hardly been there a minute when I heard a thin little voice: "Good morning, Madgie." "Well, upon my soul! Who's that speaking?" I looked round me and saw two ladies walking along under an umbrella: one old and the other young; but they had passed already and again I heard beside me: "It's too bad of you, Madgie!" What the devil! I saw that Madgie was sniffing at a dog that was following the ladies. "Aha," I said to myself, "but come, surely I am drunk! Only I fancy that very rarely happens to me." "No, Fido, you are wrong there," said Madgie—I saw her say it with my own eyes. "I have been, wow, wow, I have been very ill, wow, wow, wow!" "Oh, so it's you, you little dog! Goodness

me!" I must own I was very much surprised to hear her speaking like a human being; but afterwards, when I thought it all over, I was no longer surprised. A number of similar instances have as a fact occurred. They say that in England a fish popped up and uttered two words in such a strange language that the learned men have been for three years trying to interpret them and have not succeeded yet. I have read in the papers of two cows also who went into a shop and asked for a pound of tea. But I must own I was much more surprised when Madgie said: "I did write to you, Fido; I expect Polkan did not take my letter." Dash it all! I never in all my life heard of a dog being able to write. No one but a gentleman born can write correctly. It's true, of course, that some shopmen and even serfs can sometimes write a little; but their writing is for the most part mechanical: they have no commas, no stops, no style.

It amazed me. I must confess that of late I have begun seeing and hearing things such as no one has ever seen or heard before. "I'll follow that dog," I said to myself, "and find out what she is like and what she thinks." I opened my umbrella and set off after the two ladies. They passed into Gorohovy Street, turned into Myestchansky and from there into Stolyarny Street; at last they reached Kokushin Bridge and stopped in front of a big house. "I know that house," I said to myself. "That's Zvyerkov's Buildings. What a huge edifice! All sorts of people live in it: such lots of cooks, of visitors from all parts! and our friends the clerks, one on the top of another, with a third trying to squeeze in, like dogs. I have a friend

A MADMAN'S DIARY

living there, who plays capitally on the horn." The ladies went up to the fifth storey. "Good," I thought, "I won't go in now, but I will note the place and I will certainly take advantage of the first opportunity."

October 4.

To-day is Wednesday, and so I was in our chief's study. I came a little early on purpose and, sitting down, began mending the pens. Our director must be a very clever man. His whole study is lined with bookshelves. I have read the titles of some of them: they are all learned, so learned that they are quite beyond any one like me—they are all either in French or in German. And just look into his face! Ough! what importance in his eyes! I have never heard him say a word too much. Only sometimes when one hands him the papers he'll ask: "What's it like out of doors?" "Damp, your Excellency." Yes, he is a cut above any one like me! He's a statesman. I notice, however, he is particularly fond of me. If his daughter, too, were . . . Ah, you rascal! . . . Never mind, never mind, silence! I read *The Bee*. They are stupid people, the French! What do they want? I'd take the lot of them, upon my word I would, and thrash them all soundly! In it I read a very pleasant description of a ball written by a country gentleman of Kursk. The country gentlemen of Kursk write well. Then I noticed it was half-past twelve and that our chief had not come out of his bedroom. But about half-past one an event occurred which no pen could describe. The door opened, I thought it was the director and jumped up from my chair with my papers,

but it was she, she herself! Holy saints, how she was dressed! Her dress was white as a swan—ough, how sumptuous! And the look in her eye—like sunshine, upon my soul, like sunshine. She bowed and said: "Hasn't Papa been here?" Aie, aie, aie, what a voice! A canary, a regular canary. "Your Excellency," I was on the point of saying, "do not bid them punish me, but if you want to punish, then punish with your own illustrious hand." But dash it all, my tongue would not obey me, and all I said was: "No, madam." She looked at me, looked at the books, and dropped her handkerchief. I dashed forward, slipped on the damned parquet and almost smashed my nose but recovered myself and picked up the handkerchief. Saints, what a handkerchief! The most delicate batiste—amber, perfect amber! you would know from the very scent that it belonged to a general's daughter. She thanked me and gave a faint smile, so that her sugary lips scarcely moved, and after that went away. I stayed on another hour, when the footman came in and said: "You can go home, Aksenty Ivanovitch, the master has gone out." I cannot endure the flunkey set: they are always lolling about in the vestibule and don't as much as trouble themselves to nod. That's nothing: once one of the beasts had the effrontery to offer me his snuff-box without even getting up from his seat. Doesn't the fellow know I am a government clerk, that I am a gentleman by birth! However, I took my hat and put on my greatcoat myself, for these gentry never help me on with it, and went off. At home I spent most of the time lying on my bed. Then I copied out some very good verses:—

A MADMAN'S DIARY

"My love for one hour I did not see,
And a whole year it seemed to me.

My life is now a hated task,
How can I live this life, I ask."

It must have been written by Pushkin. In the evening, wrapping myself up in my greatcoat, I went to the front door of her Excellency's house and waited about for a long time on the chance of her coming out to get into her carriage, that I might snatch another glimpse of her.

November 6.

The head of our section was in a fury to-day. When I came into the department he called me into his room and began like this: "Come, kindly tell me what you are doing?" "How do you mean?" I said. "I am doing nothing." "Come, think what you are about! Why, you are over forty. It's time you had a little sense. What do you imagine yourself to be? Do you suppose I don't know all the tricks you are up to? Why, you are dangling after the director's daughter! Come, look at yourself; just think what you are! Why, you are a nonentity and nothing else! Why, you haven't a penny to bless yourself with. And just look at yourself in the looking-glass—how could you think of such a thing!" Dash it all, because his face is rather like a medicine bottle and he has a shock of hair on his head curled in a tuft, and pomades it into a kind of rosette, and holds his head in the air, he imagines he is the only one who may do anything. I understand, I understand why he is in such a rage with me. He is envious: he has seen perhaps signs of preference shown to me. But I

A MADMAN'S DIARY

spit on him! As though a court councillor were of so much consequence! He hangs a gold chain on his watch and orders boots at thirty roubles—but deuce take him! Am I some plebeian—a tailor or a son of a non-commissioned officer? I am a gentleman. Why, I may rise in the service too. I am only forty-two, a time of life in which a career in the service is really only just beginning. Wait a bit, my friend! we too shall be a colonel and perhaps, please God, something better. We shall set up a flat, and better maybe than yours. A queer notion you have got into your head that no one is a gentleman but yourself. Give me a fashionably cut coat and let me put on a cravat like yours—and then you wouldn't hold a candle to me. I haven't the means, that's the trouble.

November 8.

I have been to the theatre. It was a performance of the Russian fool Filatka. I laughed very much. There was a vaudeville too, with some amusing verses about lawyers, and especially about a collegiate registrar, very freely written so that I wondered that the censor had passed it; and about the merchants they openly said that they cheat the people and that their sons are debauched and ape the gentry. There was a very amusing couplet about the journalists too: saying that they abused every one and that an author begged the public to defend him against them. The authors do write amusing plays nowadays. I love being at the theatre. As soon as I have a coin in my pocket I can't resist going. And among our dear friends the officials there are such pigs; they positively won't go to the theatre, the louts; unless perhaps you

A MADMAN'S DIARY

give them a free ticket. One actress sang very nicely. I thought of her . . . ah, you rascal! . . . Never mind, never mind . . . silence!

November 9.

At eight o'clock I went to the department. The head of our section put on a look as though he did not see me come in. On my side, too, I behaved as though nothing had passed between us. I looked through and checked some papers. I went out at four o'clock. I walked by the director's house, but no one was to be seen. After dinner for the most part lay on my bed.

November 11.

To-day I sat in our director's study. I mended 23 pens for him and for her . . . aie, aie! for her Excellency 4 pens. He likes to have a lot of pens. Oo, he must have a head! He always sits silent, and I expect he is turning over everything in his head. I should like to know what he thinks most about. What is going on in that head? I should like to get a close view of the life of these gentlemen, of all these *équivoques* and court ways. How they go on and what they do in their circle—that's what I should like to find out! I have several times thought of beginning a conversation on the subject with his Excellency, but, dash it all! I couldn't bring my tongue to it; one says it's cold or warm to-day and can't utter another word. I should like to look into the drawing-room, of which one only sees the open door and another room beyond it. Ah, what sumptuous furniture! What mirrors and china! I long to have a look in there, into the part of the house where her Excellency

A MADMAN'S DIARY

is, that's where I should like to go! Into her boudoir where there are all sorts of little jars, little bottles, and such flowers that one is frightened even to breathe on them, to see her dresses lying scattered about, more like ethereal gossamer than dresses. I long to glance into her bedroom, there I fancy there must be marvels . . . a paradise, such as is not to be found in the heavens. To look at the little stool on which she puts her little foot when she gets out of bed and the way she puts a stocking on that little snow-white foot. . . . Aie, aie, aie! never mind, never mind . . . silence.

But to-day a light as it were dawned upon me. I remembered the conversation between the two dogs that I heard on the Nevsky Prospect. "Good," I thought to myself, "now I will learn all. I must get hold of the correspondence that these wretched dogs have been carrying on. Then I shall certainly learn something." I must own I once called Madgie to me and said to her: "Listen, Madgie; here we are alone. If you like I will shut the door too, so that no one shall see you; tell me all you know about your young lady: what she is like and how she behaves. I swear I won't tell any one." But the sly little dog put her tail between her legs, doubled herself up and went quickly to the door as though she hadn't heard. I have long suspected that dogs are far more intelligent than men; I am even convinced that they can speak, only there is a certain doggedness about them. They are extremely diplomatic: they notice everything, every step a man takes. Yes, whatever happens I will go tomorrow to Zvyerkov's Buildings, I will question Fido, and if I am successful I will seize all the letters Madgie has written her.

November 12.

At two o'clock in the afternoon I set out determined to see Fido and question her. I can't endure cabbage, the smell of which floats from all the little shops in Myestchansky Street; moreover, such a hellish reek rises from under every gate that I raced along at full speed holding my nose. And the nasty workmen let off such a lot of soot and smoke from their workshops that a gentleman cannot walk there. When I climbed up to the sixth storey and rang the bell, a girl who was not at all bad-looking, with little freckles, came to the door. I recognised her: it was the girl who was with the old lady. She turned a little red, and I said to myself at once: "You are on the lookout for a young man, my dear." "What do you want?" she asked. "I want to have a few words with your dog." The girl was silly. I saw at once that she was silly. At that moment the dog ran out barking; I tried to catch hold of her, but the nasty wretch almost snapped at my nose. However, I saw her bed in the corner. Ah, that was just what I wanted. I went up to it, rummaged in the straw in the wooden box, and to my indescribable delight pulled out a packet of little slips of paper. The wretched dog, seeing this, first bit my calf, and then when she perceived that I had taken her letters began to whine and fawn on me, but I said: "No, my dear, good-bye," and took to my heels. I believe the girl thought I was a madman, as she was very much frightened. When I got home I wanted to set to work at once to decipher the letters, for I don't see very well by candlelight; but Mavra had taken it into her head to wash the floor. These stupid Finnish women always clean at the wrong mo-

A MADMAN'S DIARY

ment. And so I went out to walk about and think over the incident. Now I shall find out all their doings and ways of thinking, all the hidden springs, and shall get to the bottom of it all. These letters will reveal everything. Dogs are clever creatures, they understand all the diplomatic relations, and so no doubt I shall find there everything about our gentleman: the portrait and all the doings of the man. There will be something in them too about her who . . . never mind, silence! Towards evening I came home. For the most part I lay on my bed.

November 13.

Well, we shall see! The writing is fairly distinct, at the same time there is something doggy about the hand. Let us read:—

“DEAR FIDO,—I never can get used to your plebeian name. As though they could not have given you a better one? Fido, Rose—what vulgarity! No more about that, however. I am very glad we thought of writing to each other.”

The letter is very well written. The punctuation and even the spelling is quite correct. Even the chief of our section could not write like this, though he does talk of having studied at some university. Let us see what comes next.

“It seems to me that to share one's ideas, one's feelings, and one's impressions with others is one of the greatest blessings on earth.”

H'm! . . . an idea taken from a work translated from the German. I don't remember the name of it.

A MADMAN'S DIARY

"I say this from experience, though I have not been about the world, beyond the gates of our house. Is not my life spent in comfort? My young lady, whom her papa calls Sophie, loves me passionately."

Aie, aie! never mind, never mind! Silence!

"Papa, too, often caresses me. I drink tea and coffee with cream. Ah, *ma chère*, I ought to tell you that I see nothing agreeable at all in big, gnawed bones such as our Polkan crunches in the kitchen. The only bones that are nice are those of game, and then only when the marrow hasn't been sucked out of them by some one. What is very good is several sauces mixed together, only they must be free from capers and green stuff; but I know nothing worse than giving dogs little balls of bread. A gentleman sitting at the table who has been touching all sorts of nasty things with his hands begins with those hands rolling up bread, calls one up and thrusts the ball upon one. To refuse seems somehow discourteous—well, one eats it—with repulsion, but one eats it. . . ."

What the devil's this! What nonsense! As though there were nothing better to write about. Let us look at another page and see if there is nothing more sensible.

"I shall be delighted to let you know about everything that happens here. I have already told you something about the chief gentleman, whom Sophie calls papa. He is a very strange man."

Ah, here we are at last! Yes, I knew it; they have a very diplomatic view of everything. Let us see what Papa is like.

". . . a very strange man. For the most part he says

A MADMAN'S DIARY

nothing; he very rarely speaks. But about a week ago he was continually talking to himself: 'Shall I receive it or shall I not?' He would take a paper in one hand and close the other hand empty and say:

'Shall I receive it or shall I not?' Once he turned to me with the question: 'What do you think, Madgie, shall I receive it or not?' I couldn't understand a word of it, I sniffed at his boots and walked away. A week later, *ma chère*, he came in in high glee. All the morning gentlemen in uniform were coming to see him and congratulating him on something. At table he was merrier than I have ever seen him; he kept telling stories. And after dinner he lifted me up to his neck and said: 'Look, Madgie, what's this?' I saw a little ribbon. I sniffed it, but could discover no aroma whatever; at last I licked it on the sly: it was a little bit salt."

H'm! This dog seems to me to be really too . . . she ought to be thrashed! And so he is ambitious! One must take that into consideration.

"Farewell, *ma chère*! I fly, and so on . . . and so on . . . I will finish my letter to-morrow. Well, good-day, I am with you again. To-day my young lady Sophie . . ."

Oh come, let us see about Sophie. Ah, you rascal. . . . Never mind, never mind . . . let us go on.

"My young lady Sophie was in a great fluster. She was getting ready to go to a ball, and I was delighted that in her absence I could write to you. My Sophie is always very glad to go to a ball, though she always gets almost angry when she is being dressed. I cannot understand why people dress. Why don't they go

A MADMAN'S DIARY

about as we do, for instance? It's nice and it's comfortable. I can't understand, *ma chère*, what pleasure there is in going to balls. Sophie always comes home from balls at six o'clock in the morning, and I can almost always guess from her pale and exhausted face that they had given the poor thing nothing to eat. I must own I couldn't live like that. If I didn't get grouse and gravy or the roast wing of a chicken, I don't know what would become of me. Gravy is nice too with grain in it, but with carrots, turnips, or artichokes it is never good."

Extraordinary inequality of style! You can see at once that it is not a man writing; it begins as it ought and ends with dogginess. Let us look at one more letter. It's rather long. H'm! and there's no date on it.

"Ah, my dear, how one feels the approach of spring! My heart beats as though I were always expecting some one. There is always a noise in my ears so that I often stand for some minutes with my foot in the air listening at doors. I must confide to you that I have a number of suitors. I often sit at the window and look at them. Oh, if only you knew what ugly creatures there are among them. One is a very ungainly yard-dog, fearfully stupid, stupidity is painted on his face; he walks about the street with an air of importance and imagines that he is a distinguished person and thinks that everybody is looking at him. Not a bit of it. I don't take any notice of him—I behave exactly as though I didn't see him. And what a terrible Great Dane stops before my window! If he were to stand upon his hind legs, which I expect

A MADMAN'S DIARY

the clumsy fellow could not do, he would be a whole head taller than my Sophie's papa, though he is fairly tall and stout. That blockhead must be a frightfully insolent fellow. I growled at him, but much he cared: he hardly frowned, he put out his tongue, dangled his huge ears and looked up at the window—such a country bumpkin! But can you suppose, *ma chère*, that my heart makes no response to any overture? Ah no. . . . If only you could see one of my suitors climbing over the fence next door, by name Trèsor. . . . Ah, *ma chère*, what a face he has! . . .”

Ough, the devil! . . . What rubbish! How can any one fill a letter with foolishness! Give me a man! I want to see a man. I want spiritual sustenance—in which my soul might find food and enjoyment; and instead of that I have this nonsense. . . . Let us turn over the page and see whether it is better!

“Sophie was sitting at the table sewing something, I was looking out of window because I am fond of watching passers-by, when all at once the footman came in and said ‘Teplov!’ ‘Ask him in,’ cried Sophie, and rushed to embrace me. ‘Ah Madgie, Madgie! If only you knew who that is: a dark young man, a kammer-junker, and such eyes, black as agates!’ And Sophie ran off to her room. A minute later a kammer-junker with black whiskers came in, walked up to the looking-glass, smoothed his hair and looked about the room. I growled and sat in my place. Sophie soon came in and bowed gaily in response to his scraping; and I just went on looking out of the window as though I were noticing nothing. However, I bent my head a little on one side and tried to hear what they were saying. Oh, *ma chère*, the nonsense they talked!

A MADMAN'S DIARY

They talked about a lady who had mistaken one figure for another at the dance; and said that some one called Bobov with a ruffle on his shirt looked just like a stork and had almost fallen down on the floor, and that a girl called Lidin imagined that her eyes were blue when they were really green—and that sort of thing. ‘Well,’ I thought to myself, ‘if one were to compare that kammer-junker to Trèsor, heavens, what a difference!’ In the first place, the kammer-junker has a perfectly flat face with whiskers all round as though he had tied it up in a black handkerchief; while Trèsor has a delicate little countenance with a white patch on the forehead. It’s impossible to compare the kammer-junker’s figure with Trèsor’s. And his eyes, his ways, his manners are all quite different. Oh, what a difference! I don’t know, *ma chère*, what she sees in her Teplov. Why she is so enthusiastic about him. . . .”

Well, I think myself that there is something wrong about it. It’s impossible that she can be fascinated by Teplov. Let us see what next.

“It seems to me that if she is attracted by that kammer-junker she will soon be attracted by that clerk that sits in papa’s study. Oh, *ma chère*, if you knew what an ugly fellow that is! A regular tortoise in a bag. . . .”

What clerk is this? . . .

“He has a very queer surname. He always sits mending the pens. The hair on his head is very much like hay. Papa sometimes sends him out instead of a servant. . . .”

I do believe the nasty little dog is alluding to me. But my hair isn’t like hay!

A MADMAN'S DIARY

"Sophie can never help laughing when she sees him."

That's a lie, you damned little dog! What an evil tongue! As though I didn't know that that is the work of envy! As though I didn't know whose tricks were at the bottom of that! This is all the doing of the chief of my section. The man has vowed eternal hatred, and here he tries to injure me again and again, at every turn. Let us look at one more letter though. Perhaps the thing will explain itself.

"MY DEAR FIDO,—Forgive me for not writing for so long. I have been in a perfect delirium. How truly has some writer said that love is a second life. Moreover, there are great changes in the house here. The kammer-junker is here every day. Sophie is frantically in love with him. Papa is very good-humoured. I have even heard from our Grigory, who sweeps the floor and almost always talks to himself, that there will soon be a wedding because papa is set on seeing Sophie married to a general or a kammer-junker or to a colonel in the army. . . ."

Deuce take it! I can't read any more. . . . It's always a kammer-junker or a general. Everything that's best in the world falls to the kammer-junkers or the generals. If you find some poor treasure and think it is almost within your grasp, a kammer-junker or a general will snatch it from you. The devil take it! I should like to become a general myself, not in order to receive her hand and all the rest of it; no, I should like to be a general only to see how they would wriggle and display all their court manners and *équivoques* and then to say to them: I spit on you both. Deuce take it, it's annoying! I tore the silly dog's letters to bits.

A MADMAN'S DIARY

December 3.

It cannot be. It's idle talk! There won't be a wedding! What if he is a kammer-junker? Why, that is nothing but a dignity, it's not a visible thing that one could pick up in one's hands. You don't get a third eye in your head because you are a kammer-junker. Why, his nose is not made of gold but is just like mine and every one else's; he sniffs with it and doesn't eat with it, he sneezes with it and doesn't cough with it. I have often tried to make out what all these differences come from. Why am I a titular councillor and on what grounds am I a titular councillor? Perhaps I am not a titular councillor at all? Perhaps I am a count or a general, and only somehow appear to be a titular councillor. Perhaps I don't know myself who I am. How many instances there have been in history: some simple, humble tradesman or peasant, not even a nobleman, is suddenly discovered to be a grand gentleman or a baron, or what do you call it. . . . If a peasant can sometimes turn into something like that, what may not a nobleman turn into? I shall suddenly, for instance, go to see our chief in a general's uniform: with an epaulette on my right shoulder and an epaulette on my left shoulder, and a blue ribbon across my chest; well, my charmer will sing a different tune then, and what will her papa, our director, himself say? Ah, he is very ambitious! He is a mason, he is certainly a mason; though he does pretend to be this and that, but I noticed at once that he was a mason: if he shakes hands with any one, he only offers him two fingers. Might I not be appointed a governor-general this very minute or an intendant, or something of that sort? I should like to

A MADMAN'S DIARY

know why I am a titular councillor. Why precisely a titular councillor?

December 5.

I spent the whole morning reading the newspaper. Strange things are going on in Spain. In fact, I can't really make it out. They write that the throne is vacant, and that they are in a difficult position about choosing an heir, and that there are insurrections in consequence. It seems to me that it is extremely queer. How can the throne be vacant? They say that some Donna ought to ascend the throne. A Donna cannot ascend the throne, she cannot possibly. There ought to be a king on the throne. "But," they say, "there is not a king." It cannot be that there is no king. A kingdom can't exist without a king. There is a king, only probably he is in hiding somewhere. He may be there, but either family reasons or danger from some neighbouring State, such as France or some other country, may compel him to remain in hiding, or there may be some other reasons.

December 8.

I quite wanted to go to the department, but various reasons and considerations detained me. I cannot get the affairs of Spain out of my head. How can it be that a Donna should be made queen? They won't allow it. England in the first place won't allow it. And besides, the politics of all Europe, the Emperor of Austria and our Tsar. . . . I must own these events have so overwhelmed and shaken me that I haven't been able to do anything all day. Mavra remarked that I was extremely absent-minded at table. And I

A MADMAN'S DIARY

believe I did accidentally throw two plates on the floor, which smashed immediately. After dinner I went for a walk down the hill: I could deduce nothing edifying from that. For the most part I lay on my bed and reflected on the affairs of Spain.

2000 A. D., *April 43.*

This is the day of the greatest public rejoicing! There is a king of Spain! He has been discovered. I am that king. I only heard of it this morning. I must own it burst upon me like a flash of lightning. I can't imagine how I could believe and imagine myself to be a titular councillor. How could that crazy, mad idea ever have entered my head? It's a good thing that no one thought of putting me in a madhouse. Now everything has been revealed to me. Now it is all as plain as possible. But until now I did not understand, everything was in a sort of mist. And I believe it all arose from believing that the brain is in the head. It's not so at all; it comes with the wind from the direction of the Caspian Sea. First of all, I told Mavra who I am. When she heard that the King of Spain was standing before her, she clasped her hands and almost died of horror; the silly woman had never seen a king of Spain before. I tried to reassure her, however, and in gracious words tried to convince her of my benevolent feelings towards her, saying that I was not angry with her for having sometimes cleaned my boots so badly. Of course they are benighted people; it is no good talking of elevated subjects to them. She is frightened because she is convinced that all kings of Spain are like Philip II. But I assured her that there was no resemblance between me and Philip

A MADMAN'S DIARY

II and that I have not even one Capucin. I didn't go to the department. The devil take it! No, my friends, you won't allure me there again; I am not going to copy your nasty papers!

*Martober 86 between
day and night.*

Our office messenger arrived to-day to tell me to go to the department, and to say that I had not been there for more than three weeks.

But people are unjust: they do their reckoning by weeks. It's the Jews brought that in because their Rabbi washes once a week. However, I did go to the department for fun. The head of our section thought that I should bow to him and apologise, but I looked at him indifferently, not too angrily and not too graciously, and sat down in my place as though I did not notice anything. I looked at all the scum of the office and thought: "If only you knew who is sitting among you!" Good gracious! wouldn't there be an upset! And the head of our section would bow to me as he bows now to the director. They put a paper before me to make some sort of an extract from it. But I didn't touch it. A few minutes later every one was in a bustle. They said the director was coming. A number of the clerks ran forward to show off to him, but I didn't stir. When he walked through our room they all buttoned up their coats, but I didn't do anything at all. What's a director? Am I going to tremble before him—never! He's a fine director! He is a cork, he is not a director. An ordinary cork, a simple cork and nothing else—such as you cork a bottle with. What amused me most of all was when they put a

paper before me to sign. They thought I should write at the bottom of the paper, So-and-so, headclerk of the table—how else should it be! But in the most important place, where the director of the department signs his name, I wrote "Ferdinand VIII." You should have seen the awe-struck silence that followed; but I only waved my hand and said: "I don't insist on any signs of allegiance!" and walked out. From there I walked straight to the director's. He was not at home. The footman did not want to let me in, but I spoke to him in such a way that he let his hands drop. I went straight to her dressing-room. She was sitting before the looking-glass; she jumped up and stepped back on seeing me. I did not tell her that I was the King of Spain, however; I only told her that there was a happiness awaiting her such as she could not imagine, and that in spite of the wiles of our enemies we should be together. I didn't care to say more and walked out. Oh, woman is a treacherous creature! I have discovered now what women are. Hitherto no one has found out with whom woman is in love: I have been the first to discover it. Woman is in love with the devil. Yes, joking apart. Scientific men write nonsense saying that she is this or that—she cares for nothing but the devil. You will see her from a box in the first tier fixing her lorgnette. You imagine she is looking at the fat man with decorations. No, she is looking at the devil who is standing behind his back. There he is, hidden in his coat. There he is, making signs to her! And she will marry him, she will marry him. And all these people, their dignified fathers who fawn on everybody and push their way to court and say that they are patriots and one thing and another:

A MADMAN'S DIARY

profit, profit is all that these patriots want! They would sell their father and their mother and God for money, ambitious creatures, Judases! All this is ambition, and the ambition is because of a little pimple under the tongue and in it a little worm no bigger than a pin's head, and it's all the doing of a barber who lives in Gorohovy Street, I don't remember his name; but I know for a fact that, in collusion with a midwife, he is trying to spread Mahometanism all over the world, and that is how it is, I am told, that the majority of people in France profess the Mahometan faith.

*No date. The day
had no number.*

I walked incognito along the Nevsky Prospect. His Majesty the Tsar drove by. All the people took off their caps and I did the same, but I made no sign that I was the King of Spain. I thought it improper to discover myself so suddenly before every one, because I ought first to be presented at court. The only thing that has prevented my doing so is the lack of a Spanish national dress. If only I could get hold of a royal mantle. I should have liked to order it from a tailor, but they are perfect asses; besides they neglect their work so, they have given themselves up to speculating and for the most part are employed in laying the pavement in the street. I determined to make the mantle out of my new uniform, which I had only worn twice. And that the scoundrels should not ruin it I decided to make it myself, shutting the door that no one might see me at it. I ripped it all up with the scissors because the cut has to be completely different.

A MADMAN'S DIARY

I don't remember the date.

There was no month either.

Goodness knows what to make of it.

The mantle is completely finished. Mavra gave a shriek when she saw me in it. However, I can't make up my mind to present myself at court, for so far there is no deputation from Spain. It wouldn't be proper to go without deputies: there would be nothing to give weight to my dignity. I expect them from hour to hour.

The 1st.

I am extremely surprised at the tardiness of the deputies. What can be detaining them? Can it be the machinations of France? Yes, that is the most malignant of States. I went to inquire at the post office whether the Spanish deputies had not arrived; but the postmaster was excessively stupid and knew nothing. "No," he said, "there are no deputies here, but if you care to write a letter I will send it off in accordance with the regulations." Dash it all, what's the use of a letter? A letter is nonsense. Letters are written by chemists, and even then they have to moisten their tongues with vinegar or else their faces would be all over scabs.

MADRID, *February*
thirtieth.

And so here I am in Spain, and it happened so quickly that I can hardly realise it yet. This morning the Spanish deputies arrived and I got into a carriage with them. The extraordinary rapidity of our journey struck me as strange. We went at such a rate

that within half an hour we had reached the frontiers of Spain. But of course now there are railroads all over Europe, and steamers go very rapidly. Spain is a strange land! When we went into the first room I saw a number of people with shaven heads. I guessed at once that these were either grandees or soldiers because they do shave their heads. I thought the behaviour of the High Chancellor, who led me by the hand, extremely strange. He thrust me into a little room and said: "Sit there, and if you persist in calling yourself King Ferdinand, I'll knock the inclination out of you." But knowing that this was only to try me I answered in the negative, whereupon the Chancellor hit me twice on the back with the stick and it hurt so that I almost cried out, but I restrained myself, remembering that this is the custom of chivalry on receiving any exalted dignity, for customs of chivalry persist in Spain to this day. When I was alone I decided to occupy myself with the affairs of state. I discovered that Spain and China are one and the same country, and it is only through ignorance that they are considered to be different kingdoms. I recommend every one to try and write Spain on a bit of paper and it will always turn out China. But I was particularly distressed by an event which will take place to-morrow. To-morrow at seven o'clock a strange phenomenon will occur: the earth will fall on the moon. The celebrated English chemist Wellington has written about it. I must confess that I experience a tremor at my heart when I reflect on the extreme softness and fragility of the moon. You see the moon is generally made in Hamburg, and very badly made too. I am surprised that England hasn't

taken notice of it. It was made by a lame cooper, and it is evident that the fool had no idea what a moon should be. He put in tarred cord and one part of olive oil; and that is why there is such a fearful stench all over the world that one has to stop up one's nose. And that's how it is that the moon is such a soft globe that man cannot live on it and that nothing lives there but noses. And it is for that very reason that we can't see our noses, because they are all in the moon. And when I reflected that the earth is a heavy body and when it falls may grind our noses to powder, I was overcome by such uneasiness that, putting on my shoes and stockings, I hastened to the hall of the Imperial Council to give orders to the police not to allow the earth to fall on the moon. The grandees with shaven heads whom I found in great numbers in the hall of the Imperial Council were very intelligent people, and when I said: "Gentlemen, let us save the moon, for the earth is trying to fall upon it!" they all rushed to carry out my sovereign wishes, and several climbed up the walls to try and get at the moon; but at that moment the High Chancellor walked in. Seeing him they all ran in different directions. I as King remained alone. But, to my amazement, the Chancellor struck me with his stick and drove me back to my room! So great is the power of national customs in Spain.

*January of the same year
(it came after February).*

So far I have not been able to make out what sort of a country Spain is. The national traditions and the customs of the court are quite extraordinary. I can't

make it out, I can't make it out, I absolutely can't make it out. To-day they shaved my head, although I shouted at the top of my voice that I didn't want to become a monk. But I can't even remember what happened afterwards when they poured cold water on my head. I have never endured such hell. I was almost going frantic so that they had a difficulty in holding me. I cannot understand the meaning of this strange custom. It's a stupid, senseless practice! The lack of good sense in the kings who have not abolished it to this day is beyond my comprehension. Judging from all the circumstances, I wonder whether I have not fallen into the hands of the Inquisition, and whether the man I took to be the Grand Chancellor isn't the Grand Inquisitor. Only I cannot understand how a king can be subject to the Inquisition. It can only be through the influence of France, especially of Polignac. Oh, that beast of a Polignac! He has sworn to me enmity to the death. And he pursues me and pursues me; but I know, my friend, that you are the tool of England. The English are great politicians. They poke their noses into everything. All the world knows that when England takes a pinch of snuff, France sneezes.

The twenty-fifth.

To-day the Grand Inquisitor came into my room again, but hearing his steps in the distance I hid under a chair. Seeing I wasn't there, he began calling me. At first he shouted "Popristchin!" I didn't say a word. Then: "Aksenty Ivanov! Titular councillor! nobleman!" I still remained silent. "Ferdinand VIII, King of Spain!" I was on the point of sticking out

A MADMAN'S DIARY

my head, but then I thought: "No, my friend, you won't take me in, I know you: you will be pouring cold water on my head again." However, he caught sight of me and drove me from under the chair with a stick. That damned stick does hurt. However, I was rewarded for all this by the discovery I made to-day. I found out that every cock has a Spain, that it is under his wings not far from his tail.

The Grand Inquisitor went away, however, very wroth, threatening me with some punishment. But I disdain his impotent malice, knowing that he is simply an instrument, a tool of England.

34 *Январь* Yrae 349.

No, I haven't the strength to endure more. My God! the things they are doing to me! They pour cold water on my head! They won't listen to me, they won't see me, they won't hear me. What have I done to them? Why do they torture me? What do they want of a poor creature like me? What can I give them? I have nothing. It's too much for me, I can't endure these agonies, my head is burning and everything is going round. Save me, take me away! Give me a troika and horses swift as a whirlwind! Take your seat, my driver, ring out, my bells, fly upwards, my steeds, and bear me away from this world! Far away, far away, so that nothing can be seen, nothing. Yonder the sky whirls before me, a star sparkles in the distance; the forest floats by with dark trees and the moon; blue-grey mist lies stretched under my feet; a chord resounds in the mist; on one side the sea, on the other Italy, yonder the huts of Russia can be seen. Is that my home in the distance? Is it my

A MADMAN'S DIARY

mother sitting before the window? Mother, save your poor son! Drop a tear on his sick head! See how they torment him! Press your poor orphan to your bosom! There is nowhere in the world for him! he is persecuted! Mother, have pity on your sick child! . . .

And do you know that the Bey of Algiers has a boil just under his nose?

THE PRISONER

THE PRISONER

(A Fragment from an Historical Romance.)

IN the year 1543, one night in the beginning of spring, the stillness of the little town of Lukomo was broken by a company of the King's soldiers. The waning moon, thrusting its shining horn through the storm-clouds that were continually screening it, lighted up for an instant the hollow in which the little town lay. To the astonishment of the few inhabitants who succeeded in waking, the company, whose coming was always the herald of disorder and pillage, moved with a sort of terrifying silence. It could be seen that the whole attention of the company was concentrated upon a prisoner, who was being dragged along in their midst, in the strangest trappings which violence has ever laid upon a man; he was covered from head to foot with weapons, which were bound round him probably to keep his body from moving. A gun-carriage was fastened to his back. The horse could scarcely move under him. The luckless prisoner would have fallen off long before, but that a thick rope bound him to the saddle. Had the moonbeam lighted up his face for one minute, it would have shone upon drops of bloody sweat trickling down his cheeks. But the moon could not see his face, for it was enclosed in a mask of iron bars. Inquisitive inhabitants, gaping with

THE PRISONER

wonder, sometimes ventured to approach nearer, but, seeing the menacing fist or sabre of one of the escort, stepped back and ran off to their tumble-down little houses, wrapping themselves more closely in their Tatar sheepskins and shivering from the chill of the night air.

The company passed the town and approached an isolated monastery. This building, which consisted of two entirely distinct parts, stood almost at the end of the town on the slope of a hill. The lower part of the church was of stone and might be described as consisting of cracks scorched and smoked by gunpowder, turned black and green with age, surrounded by nettles, hops, and wild campanulas, and bearing upon it the whole chronicle of a land that had suffered the harvests of blood. The upper part of the church with the five twisted cupolas, introduced by the corrupt Byzantine architecture, still more distorted by the barbarism of its imitators, was all of wood. The new planks, shining yellow between the blackened old ones, made it look as though striped, and showed that not so long ago it had been repaired by the devout parishioners. A pale ray of the crescent moon, making its way through the leafy apple trees that covered part of the building with their close network of twigs, fell upon the low-pitched doors and on the carved coping above them, covered with little, freely-growing yellow flowers which at that moment looked like sparks or gold letters on rough stones. One of the company, who wore incredibly immense moustaches that came down below his elbow, and could be recognized as their commander from his manner and insolently dominating glance, beat on the door with the butt-end of a

gun. The ancient walls of the monastery echoed with a sound like a dying voice, mournfully repeated in the air. After that, silence reigned again. Volleys of oaths in various dialects came from below the immense moustaches of the leader. "Open, you damned priests! Or I know how to wake you!" A pistol shot rang out. The bullet went through the gate and flew into the church window, the panes of which fell with a crash inside the church. It aroused consternation in the cells adjoining the church; lights appeared, bunches of keys jingled; the gate opened with a creak, and four monks preceded by the Father Superior came forward with crosses in their hands. . . .

"Depart, ye unclean spirits and dwellers in outer darkness," the Father Superior articulated in a scarcely audible, trembling voice. "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, avaunt, Satan!"

"What is this raving, you dirty monk?" thundered the leader in language to which it is difficult to give a name because it was composed of elements of such diverse origin. "You are raving—calling us devils; we are not devils, we are soldiers of the King."

"What men are you? I don't know you! Why have you come to trouble the church of God?"

"I'll clear your eyes with gunpowder, you dog. Give us the keys of the monastery cellars!"

"What do you want the keys of our cellars for?"

"I am not going to talk to you, foolish priest. If you want to jabber you can talk to my horse!"

"Bring the keys, Brother Kasyan, and give them to the Antichrist!" moaned the Father Superior, addressing one of the monks. "Only I have no wine! As

God is holy, I have none. Not one butt or barrel, and nothing that you could need."

"What's that to do with me? The lads are thirsty. I tell you, you foolish priest, if you don't give our horses hay, stabling, and corn, I will put them in your church and give you a kick in the face with my boot."

The Father Superior, not uttering a word, raised his pewtery eyes, which seemed to have ceased to belong to this world, for there was no trace of passion expressed in them, and met the eyes of the Jesuit fixed angrily upon him. He turned away from him and looked at the strange prisoner in the iron mask. This sight apparently impressed the old monk, though he seemed to have no feeling left for anything but his church.

"What have you seized that man for? Oh Lord, punish them with the power of the Trinity! I suppose again some martyr for the Christian faith!"

The prisoner merely uttered a low moan.

The keys were brought, and by the light of a drowsily burning lamp all the disorderly crew went up to the entrance of the vaults behind the church. As soon as they descended into the hideous underground vaults, the dampness of the tomb was all about them. The leader of the company walked in silence, and the flickering flame of the lamp with a ring of mist about it cast a pale, ghostly light upon his face, while the shadow of his immense moustaches was thrown upwards and fell in two long streaks upon the figures of the soldiers. Only the coarsely moulded curves of his face were clearly defined by the light, exposing the hardened callousness of its expression, which betrayed that all softness was frozen and dead in that

THE PRISONER

soul, that life and death were nought to it, that its greatest pleasure lay in vodka and tobacco, that it found its bliss in the clash of ruin and havoc wrought by drunken brawls. He was a medley of border nations: by birth, a Serb who had recklessly destroyed everything human in him in revelry and pillage in Hungary; in dress and to some extent in language a Pole, in greed for gold a Jew, in debauchery a Cossack, in steely indifference a devil. All the while he appeared composed; only from time to time his habitual oaths came noisily from under his moustaches, especially when the uneven earthen floor, sinking now and again into deep hollows, made him stumble. He carefully examined the holes in the earthen walls, which now had fallen in, but once had served as cells and the only places of refuge in that land, where rarely a year passed without the steppes and fields being devastated, where no one built solid houses or castles, knowing how insecure was their existence. At last a wooden door, overgrown with moss, stained by mildew and blocked with heavy beams and stones, came into sight. He stopped, facing it, and looked it up and down significantly. "Now then!" he said, twitching his eyebrow as he looked at the door, and that shaggy eyebrow struck a chill to the heart. Several men set to work and not without difficulty rolled away the beams. The door was opened. Good God, what a fearful habitation was disclosed! The soldiers looked mutely at one another before they ventured to go in. There is something of the horror of the tomb in the bowels of the earth. There death reigns in all its stony majesty and stretches its bony limbs under all the flourishing villages and towns, under all the rejoicing, living world.

THE PRISONER

But if the bowels of the earth, full of the atmosphere of death, are peopled with living creatures, those hellish gnomes the very sight of which sets one shuddering, then they are still more terrible. The smell of decay was so strong that it took their breath away at first. A toad of almost gigantic proportions remained motionless, its fearful eyes bulging at the intruders upon its solitude. It was a square cave with no other way out. Regular festoons of spiders' webs hung in dark clusters from the roof of earth that formed the ceiling. The earth that had crumbled from the vaulted roof lay in heaps upon the ground. Human bones protruded from one of them; lizards darting away like lightning scurried over them. An owl or a bat in this place would have seemed lovely.

"And what's wrong with that for a lodging? It's a fine lodging!" roared the leader. "Ah, you'll sleep well here, you dog! You can lie on your irons, and put that toad under your head, or take her for your wife in the night!"

One of the soldiers thought well to laugh at this, but the laugh rang out so hollow and dreadful under the damp, vaulted roof that even he was frightened. The prisoner, who had till then stood motionless, was thrust into the middle of the cave and only heard the door creak behind him and the dull thud of the beams being rolled back. The light vanished and darkness swallowed up the cave.

The luckless captive shuddered. It seemed to him as though the lid of the coffin had been slammed upon him, and the thud of the beam that barred the door was like the ring of the spade when the dreadful earth covers the last traces of a man's existence, and the

THE PRISONER

crowd, as indifferent as the tomb, says as though in a dream: "He is not now, but he was." After the first horror he abandoned himself to a sort of senseless concentration, that soulless existence to which a man abandons himself when the blow is so terrible that he cannot rally himself enough to think of it, but gazes instead at some trivial object and scrutinizes it. Then he belongs to another world and has nought in common with anything human: he sees without understanding, feels without feeling, lives strangely. First of all, his attention was fixed upon the darkness. Everything was for a time forgotten—the horror of it and the thought of being buried alive. He was absorbed with all his feelings in the darkness. And then a quite new, strange world was unfolded before him. At first he saw streaks of light in the darkness—the last memories of light. These streaks assumed all sorts of patterns and colours. There is no such thing as absolute darkness for the eyes. However tightly one shuts them they imagine the colours they have seen. These many-coloured patterns took the form of a bright-coloured shawl, or of veined marble, or that appearance which impresses us by its wonderful strangeness when one looks into the microscope at the wing or leg of an insect. At times the elegant lattice of a window, which, alas! he had not in his prison, hovered before him. A patch of azure floated fantastically in its black framework, then changed into coffee colour, then vanished altogether and changed into black, dotted with yellow, or blue, or spots or flecks of an undefined colour. Soon all this world began to disappear; the prisoner felt something different; at first the feeling was indefinable; then it began to be more definite. He

felt something cold on his hand; his fingers involuntarily touched something slimy. The thought of the toad suddenly dawned on him! . . . He uttered a shriek and was instantly transported into the world of reality. His mind suddenly grasped all the horror of his position. Combined with this was the utter exhaustion of his strength, the terribly close atmosphere: all this threw him into a prolonged swoon.

Meanwhile the soldiers installed themselves in the monastery cells as though they were at home, sending the monks to clean the stables, and feasted, rejoicing that at last they had seized the man they wanted.

1830

THE NOSE

THE NOSE

I

AN extraordinarily strange incident took place in Petersburg on the 25th of March. The barber, Ivan Yakovlevitch, who lives in the Voznesensky Prospect (his surname is lost, and nothing more appears even on his signboard, where a gentleman is depicted with his cheeks covered with soapsuds, together with an inscription "also lets blood")—the barber Ivan Yakovlevitch woke up rather early and was aware of a smell of hot bread. Raising himself in bed he saw his spouse, a rather portly lady who was very fond of drinking coffee, engaged in taking out of the oven some freshly-baked loaves.

"I won't have coffee to-day, Praskovya Osipovna," said Ivan Yakovlevitch; "instead I should like some hot bread with onion." (The fact is that Ivan Yakovlevitch would have liked both, but he knew that it was utterly impossible to ask for two things at once, for Praskovya Osipovna greatly disliked such caprices.)

"Let the fool have bread, so much the better for me," thought his spouse to herself; "there will be an extra cup of coffee left," and she flung one loaf on the table."

For the sake of propriety Ivan Yakovlevitch put a tail coat over his shirt, and, sitting down to the

THE NOSE

table, sprinkled with salt and prepared two onions, took a knife in his hand and, making a solemn face, set to work to cut the bread. After dividing the loaf into two halves he looked into the middle of it—and to his amazement saw there something that looked white. Ivan Yakovlevitch scooped at it carefully with his knife and felt it with his finger: "It's solid," he said to himself. "Whatever can it be?"

He thrust in his finger and drew it out—it was a nose! . . . Ivan Yakovlevitch's hand dropped with astonishment, he rubbed his eyes and felt it: it actually was a nose, and, what's more, it looked to him somehow familiar. A look of horror came into Ivan Yakovlevitch's face. But that horror was nothing to the indignation with which his wife was overcome.

"Where have you cut that nose off, you brute?" she cried wrathfully. "You scoundrel, you drunkard, I'll go to the police myself to tell of you! You ruffian! Here I have heard from three men that when you are shaving them you pull at their noses till you almost tug them off."

But Ivan Yakovlevitch was more dead than alive: he perceived that the nose was no other than that of Kovalyov, the collegiate assessor, whom he shaved every Wednesday and every Sunday.

"Stay, Praskovya Osipovna! I'll wrap it up in a rag and put it in a corner. Let it stay there for a bit; I'll return it later on."

"I won't hear of it! As though I would allow a stray nose to lie about in my room. You dried-up biscuit! To be sure, he can do nothing but sharpen his razors on the strop, but soon he won't be fit to do his duties at all, the gad-about, the good-for-nothing!

THE NOSE

As though I were going to answer to the police for you. . . . Oh, you sloven, you stupid blockhead. Away with it, away with it! Take it where you like! Don't let me set eyes on it again!"

Ivan Yakovlevitch stood as though utterly crushed. He thought and thought, and did not know what to think. "The devil only knows how it happened," he said at last, scratching behind his ear. "Did I come home drunk last night or not? I can't say for certain now. But from all signs and tokens it must be a thing quite unheard of, for bread is a thing that is baked, while a nose is something quite different. I can't make head or tail of it." Ivan Yakovlevitch sank into silence. The thought that the police might make a search there for the nose and throw the blame of it on him reduced him to complete prostration. Already the red collar, beautifully embroidered with silver, the sabre, hovered before his eyes, and he trembled all over. At last he got his breeches and his boots, pulled on these wretched objects, and, accompanied by the stern upbraidings of Praskovya Osipovna, wrapped the nose in a rag and went out into the street.

He wanted to thrust it out of sight somewhere, under a gate, or somehow accidentally to drop it and then turn off into a side street, but as ill-luck would have it he kept coming upon some one he knew, who would at once begin by asking: "Where are you going?" or "Whom are you going to shave so early?" so that Ivan Yakovlevitch could never find a good moment. Another time he really did drop it, but a sentry pointed to it with his halberd from a long way off, saying as he did so: "Pick it up, you have dropped something!" and Ivan Yakovlevitch was obliged to pick up the nose

THE NOSE

and put it in his pocket. He was overcome by despair, especially as the number of people in the street was continually increasing as the shops and stalls began to open.

He made up his mind to go to St. Isaac's Bridge in the hope of being able to fling it into the Neva. . . . But I am rather in fault for not having hitherto said anything about Ivan Yakovlevitch, a worthy man in many respects.

Ivan Yakovlevitch, like every self-respecting Russian workman, was a terrible drunkard, and though every day he shaved other people's chins, his own went for ever unshaven. Ivan Yakovlevitch's tail coat (he never wore any other shape) was piebald, that is, it was black dappled all over with brown and yellow and grey; the collar was shiny, and instead of three buttons there was only one hanging on a thread. Ivan Yakovlevitch was a great cynic, and when Kovalyov the collegiate assessor said to him while he was being shaved: "Your hands always stink, Ivan Yakovlevitch," the latter would reply with the question: "What should make them stink?" "I can't tell, my good man, but they do stink," the collegiate assessor would say, and, taking a pinch of snuff, Ivan Yakovlevitch lathered him for it on his cheeks and under his nose and behind his ears and under his beard—in fact wherever he chose.

The worthy citizen found himself by now on St. Isaac's Bridge. First of all he looked about him, then bent over the parapet as though to look under the bridge to see whether there were a great number of fish racing by, and stealthily flung in the rag with the nose. He felt as though with it a heavy weight had rolled off his back. Ivan Yakovlevitch actually grinned. In-

THE NOSE

stead of going to shave the chins of government clerks, he repaired to an establishment bearing the inscription "Tea and refreshments" and asked for a glass of punch, when he suddenly observed at the end of the bridge a police inspector of respectable appearance with full whiskers, with a three-cornered hat and a sword. He turned cold, and meanwhile the inspector beckoned to him and said: "Come this way, my good man."

Ivan Yakovlevitch, knowing the etiquette, took off his hat some way off and, as he approached, said: "I wish your honour good health."

"No, no, old fellow, I am not 'your honour': tell me what you were about, standing on the bridge?"

"Upon my soul, sir, I was on my way to shave my customers, and I was only looking to see whether the current was running fast."

"That's a lie, that's a lie! You won't get off with that. Kindly answer!"

"I am ready to shave you, gracious sir, two or even three times a week with no conditions whatever," answered Ivan Yakovlevitch.

"No, my friend, that is nonsense; I have three barbers to shave me and they think it a great honour, too. But be so kind as to tell me what you were doing there?"

Ivan Yakovlevitch turned pale . . . but the incident is completely veiled in obscurity, and absolutely nothing is known of what happened next.

II

Kovalyov the collegiate assessor woke up early next morning and made the sound "brrrr . . ." with the lips as he always did when he woke up, though he could

THE NOSE

not himself have explained the reason for his doing so. Kovalyov stretched and asked for a little looking-glass that was standing on the table. He wanted to look at a pimple which had come out upon his nose on the previous evening, but to his great astonishment there was a completely flat space where his nose should have been. Kovalyov in a fright asked for some water and a towel to rub his eyes: there really was no nose. He began feeling with his hand, and pinched himself to see whether he was still asleep: it appeared that he was not asleep. The collegiate assessor jumped out of bed, he shook himself—there was still no nose. . . . He ordered his clothes to be given him at once and flew off straight to the head police-master.

But meanwhile we must say a word about Kovalyov in order that the reader may have some idea of what kind of collegiate assessor he was. Collegiate assessors who receive that title through learned diplomas cannot be compared with those who are created collegiate assessors in the Caucasus. They are two quite different species. The learned collegiate assessors . . . But Russia is such a wonderful country that, if you say a word about one collegiate assessor, all the collegiate assessors from Riga to Kamchatka would certainly take it to themselves; and it is the same, of course, with all grades and titles. Kovalyov was a collegiate assessor from the Caucasus. He had only been of that rank for the last two years, and so could not forget it for a moment; and to give himself greater weight and dignity he did not call himself simply collegiate assessor but always spoke of himself as a major. "Listen, my dear," he would usually say when he met in the street a woman selling shirt-fronts, "you go to my

THE NOSE

house; I live in Sadovoy Street; just ask, does Major Kovalyov live here? Any one will show you." If he met some prepossessing little baggage he would give her besides a secret instruction, adding: "You ask for Major Kovalyov's flat, my love." For this reason we will for the future speak of him as the major.

Major Kovalyov was in the habit of walking every day up and down the Nevsky Prospect. The collar of his shirt-front was always extremely clean and well starched. His whiskers were such as one may see nowadays on provincial and district surveyors, on architects and army doctors, also on those employed on special commissions and in general on all such men as have full ruddy cheeks and are very good hands at a game of boston: these whiskers start from the middle of the cheek and go straight up to the nose. Major Kovalyov used to wear a number of cornelian seals, some with crests on them and others on which were carved Wednesday, Thursday, Monday, and so on. Major Kovalyov had come to Petersburg on business, that is, to look for a post befitting his rank: if he were successful, the post of a vice-governor, and failing that the situation of an executive clerk in some prominent department. Major Kovalyov was not averse to matrimony, but only on condition he could find a bride with a fortune of two hundred thousand. And so the reader may judge for himself what was the major's position when he saw, instead of a nice-looking, well-proportioned nose, an extremely stupid level space.

As ill-luck would have it, not a cab was to be seen in the street, and he was obliged to walk, wrapping himself in his cloak and hiding his face in his handkerchief, as though his nose were bleeding. "But perhaps it was

my imagination: it's impossible I could have been so silly as to lose my nose," he thought, and went into a confectioner's on purpose to look at himself in the looking-glass. Fortunately there was no one in the shop: some boys were sweeping the floor and putting all the chairs straight; others with sleepy faces were bringing in hot turnovers on trays: yesterday's papers covered with coffee stains were lying about on the tables and chairs. "Well, thank God, there is nobody here," he thought; "now I can look." He went timidly up to the mirror and looked. "What the devil's the meaning of it? how nasty!" he commented, spitting. "If only there had been something instead of a nose, but there is nothing! . . ."

Biting his lips, he went out of the confectioner's with annoyance, and resolved, contrary to his usual practice, not to look or smile at any one. All at once he stood as though rooted to the spot before the door of a house. Something inexplicable took place before his eyes: a carriage was stopping at the entrance; the carriage door flew open; a gentleman in uniform, bending down, sprang out and ran up the steps. What was the horror and at the same time amazement of Kovalyov when he recognised that this was his own nose! At this extraordinary spectacle it seemed to him that everything was heaving before his eyes; he felt that he could scarcely stand; but he made up his mind, come what may, to await the gentleman's return to the carriage, and he stood trembling all over as though in fever. Two minutes later the nose actually did come out. He was in a gold-laced uniform with a big stand-up collar; he had on chamois-leather breeches, at his side was a sword. From his plumed hat it might be

THE NOSE

gathered that he was of the rank of a civil councillor. Everything showed that he was going somewhere to pay a visit. He looked to both sides, called to the coachman to open the carriage door, got in and drove off.

Poor Kovalyov almost went out of his mind; he did not know what to think of such a strange occurrence. How was it possible for a nose—which had only yesterday been on his face and could neither drive nor walk—to be in uniform! He ran after the carriage, which luckily did not go far, but stopped before the entrance to the bazaar.

He hurried in that direction, made his way through a row of old beggar women with their faces tied up and two chinks in place of their eyes at whom he used to laugh so merrily. There were not many people about. Kovalyov felt so upset that he could not make up his mind what to do, and looked for the gentleman up and down the street; at last he saw him standing before a shop. The nose was hiding his face completely in a high stand-up collar and was surveying some goods in the shop window with the utmost attention.

"How am I to approach him?" thought Kovalyov. "One can see by everything—from his uniform, from his hat—that he is a civil councillor. The devil only knows how to do it!"

He began by coughing at his side; but the nose never changed his position for a minute.

"Sir," said Kovalyov, inwardly forcing himself to speak confidently. "Sir. . . ."

"What do you want?" answered the nose, turning round.

"It seems . . . strange to me, sir. . . . You ought to

THE NOSE

know your proper place, and all at once I find you, where? . . . You will admit . . ."

"Excuse me, I cannot understand what you are talking about. . . . Explain."

"How am I to explain to him?" thought Kovalyov, and plucking up his courage he began: "Of course I . . . I am a major, by the way. For me to go about without a nose you must admit is improper. An old woman selling peeled oranges on Voskresensky Bridge may sit there without a nose; but having prospects of obtaining . . . and being besides acquainted with a great many ladies in the families of Tchehtarev the civil councillor and others . . . You can judge for yourself . . . I don't know, sir (at this point Major Kovalyov shrugged his shoulders) . . . excuse me . . . if you look at the matter in accordance with the principles of duty and honour . . . you can understand of yourself . . ."

"I don't understand a word," said the nose. "Explain it more satisfactorily."

"Sir," said Kovalyov, with a sense of his own dignity, "I don't know how to understand your words. The matter appears to me perfectly obvious . . . either you wish . . . Why, you are my own nose!"

The nose looked at the major and his eyebrows slightly quivered.

"You are mistaken, sir, I am an independent individual. Moreover, there can be no sort of close relations between us. I see, sir, from the buttons of your uniform, you must be serving in a different department." Saying this the nose turned away.

Kovalyov was utterly confused, not knowing what to do or even what to think. Meanwhile they heard

THE NOSE

the agreeable rustle of a lady's dress: an elderly lady was approaching, all decked out in lace, and with her a slim lady in a white dress which looked very charming on her slender figure, in a straw-coloured hat as light as a pastry puff. Behind them stood, opening his snuff-box, a tall footman with big whiskers and quite a dozen collars.

Kovalyov came nearer, pulled out the cambric collar of his shirt-front, arranged the seals on his gold watch-chain, and, smiling from side to side, turned his attention to the ethereal lady who, like a spring flower, faintly swayed forward and put her white hand with its half-transparent fingers to her brow. The smile on Kovalyov's face broadened when he saw under the hat her round, dazzlingly white chin and part of her cheek flushed with the hues of the first spring rose; but all at once he skipped away as though he had been scalded. He recollected that he had absolutely nothing on his face in place of a nose, and tears oozed from his eyes. He turned away to tell the gentleman in uniform straight out that he was only pretending to be a civil councillor, that he was a rogue and a scoundrel, and that he was nothing else than his own nose. . . . But the nose was no longer there; he had managed to gallop off, probably again to call on some one.

This reduced Kovalyov to despair. He went back and stood for a minute or two under the colonnade, carefully looking in all directions to see whether the nose was anywhere about. He remembered very well that there was a plume in his hat and gold lace on his uniform; but he had not noticed his greatcoat nor the colour of his carriage, nor his horses, nor even whether he had a footman behind him and if so in what livery.

Moreover, such numbers of carriages were driving backwards and forwards and at such a speed that it was difficult even to distinguish them; and if he had distinguished one of them he would have had no means of stopping it. It was a lovely, sunny day. There were masses of people on the Nevsky; ladies were scattered like a perfect cataract of flowers all over the pavement from Politseysky to the Anitchkin Bridge. Here he saw coming towards him an upper-court councillor of his acquaintance whom he used to call "lieutenant-colonel," particularly if he were speaking to other people. There he saw Yaryzhkin, a head clerk in the senate, a great friend of his, who always lost points when he went eight at boston. And here was another major who had received the rank of assessor in the Caucasus, beckoning to him. . . .

"Ah, deuce take it," said Kovalyov. "Hi, cab! drive straight to the police-master's."

Kovalyov got into a cab and shouted to the driver:

"Drive like a house on fire."

"Is the police-master at home?" he cried, going into the entry.

"No," answered the porter, "he has only just gone out."

"Well, I declare!"

"Yes," added the porter, "and he has not been gone so long: if you had come but a tiny minute earlier you might have found him."

Kovalyov, still keeping the handkerchief over his face, got into the cab and shouted in a voice of despair: "Drive on."

"Where?" asked the cabman.

"Drive straight on!"

THE NOSE

"How straight on? Here's the turning, is it to right or to left?"

This question pulled Kovalyov up and forced him to think again. In his position he ought first of all to address himself to the department of law and order, not because it had any direct connection with the police but because the intervention of the latter might be far more rapid than any help he could get in other departments. To seek satisfaction from the higher officials of the department in which the nose had announced himself as serving would have been injudicious, since from the nose's own answers he had been able to perceive that nothing was sacred to that man and that he might tell lies in this case too, just as he had lied in declaring that he had never seen him before. And so Kovalyov was on the point of telling the cabman to drive to the police station, when again the idea occurred to him that this rogue and scoundrel who had at their first meeting behaved in such a shameless way might seize the opportunity and slip out of the town—and then all his searches would be in vain, or might be prolonged, which God forbid, for a whole month. At last it seemed that Heaven itself directed him. He decided to go straight to a newspaper office and without loss of time to publish a circumstantial description of the nose, so that any one meeting it might at once present it to him or at least let him know where it was. And so, deciding upon this course, he told the cabman to drive to the newspaper office, and all the way never ceased pommelling him with his fist on the back, saying as he did so, "Quicker, you rascal; make haste, you knave!"

"Ugh, sir!" said the cabman, shaking his head and

flicking with the reins at the horse, whose coat was as long as a lapdog's. At last the droshky stopped and Kovalyov ran panting into a little reception room where a grey-headed clerk in spectacles, wearing an old tailcoat, was sitting at a table and with a pen between his teeth was counting over some coppers he had before him.

"Who receives inquiries here?" cried Kovalyov. "Ah, good day!"

"I wish you good day," said the grey-headed clerk, raising his eyes for a moment and then dropping them again on the money lying in heaps on the table.

"I want to insert an advertisement . . ."

"Allow me to ask you to wait a minute," the clerk pronounced, with one hand noting a figure on the paper and with the finger of his left hand moving two beads on the reckoning board. A flunkey with braid on his livery and a rather clean appearance, which betrayed that he had at some time served in an aristocratic family, was standing at the table with a written paper in his hand and thought fit to display his social abilities: "Would you believe it, sir, that the little cur is not worth eighty kopecks; in fact I wouldn't give eight for it, but the countess is fond of it—my goodness, she is fond of it, and here she will give a hundred roubles to any one who finds it! To speak politely, as you and I are speaking now, people's tastes are quite incompatible: when a man's a sportsman then he'll keep a setter or a poodle; he won't mind giving five hundred or a thousand so long as it is a good dog."

The worthy clerk listened to this with a significant air, and at the same time was reckoning the number of letters in the advertisement brought him. Along

THE NOSE

the sides of the room stood a number of old women, shop-boys, and house-porters who had brought advertisements. In one it was announced that a coachman of sober habits was looking for a situation; in the next a second-hand carriage brought from Paris in 1814 was offered for sale; next a maid-servant, aged nineteen, experienced in laundry work and also competent to do other work, was looking for a situation; a strong droshky with only one spring broken was for sale; a spirited, young, dappled grey horse, only seventeen years old, for sale; a new consignment of turnip and radish seed from London; a summer villa with all conveniences, stabling for two horses, and a piece of land that might well be planted with fine birches and pine trees; there was also an appeal to those wishing to purchase old boot-soles, inviting such to come for the same every day between eight o'clock in the morning and three o'clock in the afternoon. The room in which all this company was assembled was a small one and the air in it was extremely thick, but the collegiate assessor Kovalyov was incapable of noticing the stench both because he kept his handkerchief over his face and because his nose was goodness knows where.

"Dear sir, allow me to ask you . . . my case is very urgent," he said at last impatiently.

"In a minute, in a minute! . . . Two roubles, forty-three kopecks! . . . This minute! One rouble and sixty-four kopecks!" said the grey-headed gentleman, flinging the old women and house-porters the various documents they had brought. "What can I do for you?" he said at last, turning to Kovalyov.

"I want to ask . . ." said Kovalyov. "Some rob-

THE NOSE

bery or trickery has occurred; I cannot make it out at all. I only want you to advertise that any one who brings me the scoundrel will receive a handsome reward."

"Allow me to ask what is your surname?"

"No, why put my surname? I cannot give it you! I have a large circle of acquaintances: Madame Tchehtarev, wife of a civil councillor, Pelageya Grigoryevna Podtatchin, widow of an officer . . . they will find out. God forbid! You can simply put: 'a collegiate assessor,' or better still, 'a person of major's rank.'"

"Is the runaway your house-serf, then?"

"A house-serf indeed! that would not be so great a piece of knavery! It's my nose . . . has run away from me . . . my own nose."

"H'm, what a strange surname! And is it a very large sum this Mr. Nosov has robbed you of?"

"Nosov! . . . you are on the wrong tack. It is my nose, my own nose that has disappeared, I don't know where. The devil wanted to have a joke at my expense."

"But in what way did it disappear? There is something I can't quite understand."

"And indeed, I can't tell you how it happened; the point is that now it is driving about the town, calling itself a civil councillor. And so I beg you to announce that any one who catches him must bring him at once to me as quickly as possible. Only think, really, how can I get on without such a conspicuous part of my person. It's not like a little toe, the loss of which I could hide in my boot and no one could say whether it was there or not. I go on Thursdays to Madame

THE NOSE

Tchehtatrev's; Pelageya Grigoryevna Podtatchin, an officer's widow, and her very pretty daughter are great friends of mine; and you can judge for yourself what a fix I am in now. . . . I can't possibly show myself now. . . ."

The clerk pondered, a fact which was manifest from the way he compressed his lips.

"No, I can't put an advertisement like that in the paper," he said at last, after a long silence.

"What? Why not?"

"Well. The newspaper might lose its reputation. If every one is going to write that his nose has run away, why . . . As it is, they say we print lots of absurd things and false reports."

"But what is there absurd about this? I don't see anything absurd in it."

"You fancy there is nothing absurd in it? But last week, now, this was what happened. A government clerk came to me just as you have; he brought an advertisement, it came to two roubles seventy-three kopecks, and all the advertisement amounted to was that a poodle with a black coat had strayed. You wouldn't think that there was anything in that, would you? But it turned out to be a lampoon on some one: the poodle was the cashier of some department, I don't remember which."

"But I am not asking you to advertise about poodles but about my own nose; that is almost the same as about myself."

"No, such an advertisement I cannot insert."

"But since my nose really is lost!"

"If it is lost that is a matter for the doctor. They say there are people who can fit you with a nose of

any shape you like. But I observe you must be a gentleman of merry disposition and are fond of having your joke."

"I swear as God is holy! If you like, since it has come to that, I will show you."

"I don't want to trouble you," said the clerk, taking a pinch of snuff. "However, if it is no trouble," he added, moved by curiosity, "it might be desirable to have a look."

The collegiate assessor took the handkerchief from his face. "It really is extremely strange," said the clerk, "the place is perfectly flat, like a freshly fried pancake. Yes, it's incredibly smooth."

"Will you dispute it now? You see for yourself I must advertise. I shall be particularly grateful to you and very glad this incident has given me the pleasure of your acquaintance."

The major, as may be seen, made up his mind on this occasion to resort to a little flattery.

"To print such an advertisement is, of course, not such a very great matter," said the clerk. "But I do not foresee any advantage to you from it. If you do want to, put it in the hands of some one with a skilful pen, describe it as a rare freak of nature, and publish the little article in the *Northern Bee*" (at this point he once more took a pinch of snuff) "for the benefit of youth" (at this moment he wiped his nose), "or anyway as a matter of general interest."

The collegiate assessor felt quite hopeless. He dropped his eyes and looked at the bottom of the paper where there was an announcement of an entertainment; his face was ready to break into a smile as he saw the name of a pretty actress, and his hand

THE NOSE

went to his pocket to feel whether he had a five-rouble note there, for an officer of his rank ought, in Kovalyov's opinion, to have a seat in the stalls; but the thought of his nose spoilt it all.

Even the clerk seemed touched by Kovalyov's difficult position. Desirous of relieving his distress in some way, he thought it befitting to express his sympathy in a few words: "I am really very much grieved that such an incident should have occurred to you. Wouldn't you like a pinch of snuff? it relieves headache and dissipates depression; even in intestinal trouble it is of use." Saying this the clerk offered Kovalyov his snuff-box, rather neatly opening the lid with a portrait of a lady in a hat on it.

This unpremeditated action drove Kovalyov out of all patience.

"I can't understand how you can think fit to make a joke of it," he said angrily; "don't you see that I am without just what I need for sniffing! The devil take your snuff! I can't bear the sight of it now, not merely your miserable Berezhina stuff but even if you were to offer me rappee itself!" Saying this he walked out of the newspaper office, deeply mortified, and went in the direction of the local police superintendent.

Kovalyov walked in at the very moment when he was stretching and clearing his throat and saying: "Ah, I should enjoy a couple of hours' nap!" And so it might be foreseen that the collegiate assessor's visit was not very opportune. The police superintendent was a great patron of all arts and manufactures; but the paper note he preferred to everything. "That is a thing," he used to say, "there is nothing better than that thing; it does not ask for food, it takes up little

space, there is always room for it in the pocket, and if you drop it, it does not break."

The police superintendent received Kovalyov rather coldly and said that after dinner was not the time to make an enquiry, that nature itself had ordained that man should rest a little after eating (the collegiate assessor could see from this that the sayings of the ancient sages were not unfamiliar to the local superintendent), and that a respectable man does not have his nose pulled off.

This was adding insult to injury. It must be said that Kovalyov was very easily offended. He could forgive anything whatever said about himself, but could never forgive insult to his rank or his calling. He was even of the opinion that any reference to officers of the higher ranks might be allowed to pass in stage plays, but that no attack ought to be made on those of a lower grade. The reception given him by the local superintendent so disconcerted him that he tossed his head and said with an air of dignity and a slight gesticulation of surprise: "I must observe that after observations so insulting on your part I can add nothing more . . ." and went out.

He went home hardly conscious of the ground under his feet. But now it was dusk. His lodgings seemed to him melancholy or rather utterly disgusting after all these unsuccessful efforts. Going into his entry he saw his valet, Ivan, lying on his dirty leather sofa; he was spitting on the ceiling and rather successfully aiming at the same spot. The nonchalance of his servant enraged him; he hit him on the forehead with his hat, saying: "You pig, you are always doing something stupid."

THE NOSE

Ivan leapt up and rushed headlong to help him off with his cloak.

Going into his room, weary and dejected, the major threw himself into an easy chair, and at last, after several sighs, said:—

“My God, my God! Why has this misfortune befallen me? If I had lost an arm or a leg—anyway it would have been better; but without a nose a man is goodness knows what: neither fish nor fowl nor human being, good for nothing but to fling out of window! And if only it had been cut off in battle or in a duel, or if I had been the cause of it myself, but, as it is, it is lost for no cause or reason, it is lost for nothing, absolutely nothing! But no, it cannot be,” he added after a moment’s thought; “it’s incredible that a nose should be lost. It must be a dream or an illusion. Perhaps by some mistake I drank instead of water the vodka I use to rub my chin after shaving. Ivan, the fool, did not remove it and very likely I took it.” To convince himself that he was not drunk, the major pinched himself so painfully that he shrieked. The pain completely convinced him that he was living and acting in real life. He slowly approached the looking-glass and at first screwed up his eyes with the idea that maybe his nose would appear in its proper place; but at the same minute sprang back, saying: “What a caricature.”

It really was incomprehensible; if a button had been lost or a silver spoon or a watch or anything similar—but to have lost this, and in one’s own flat too! . . . Thinking over all the circumstances, Major Kovalyov reached the supposition that what might be nearest the truth was that the person responsible for this could be

THE NOSE

no other than Madame Podtatchin, who wanted him to marry her daughter. He himself liked flirting with her, but avoided a definite engagement. When the mother had informed him directly that she wished for the marriage, he had slyly put her off with his compliments, saying that he was still young, that he must serve for five years so as to be exactly forty-two. And that Madame Podtatchin had therefore made up her mind, probably out of revenge, to ruin him, and had hired for the purpose some peasant witches, because it was impossible to suppose that the nose had been cut off in any way; no one had come into his room; the barber Ivan Yakovlevitch had shaved him on Wednesday, and all Wednesday and even all Thursday his nose had been all right—that he remembered and was quite certain about; besides, he would have felt pain, and there could have been no doubt that the wound could not have healed so soon and been as flat as a pancake. He formed various plans in his mind: either to summon Madame Podtatchin formally before the court or to go to her himself and tax her with it. These reflections were interrupted by a light which gleamed through all the cracks of the door and let him know that a candle had been lighted in the entry by Ivan. Soon Ivan himself appeared, holding it before him and lighting up the whole room. Kovalyov's first movement was to snatch up his handkerchief and cover the place where yesterday his nose had been, that his really stupid servant might not gape at the sight of anything so peculiar in his master.

Ivan had hardly time to retreat to his lair when there was the sound of an unfamiliar voice in the en-

THE NOSE

try, pronouncing the words: "Does the collegiate assessor Kovalyov live here?"

"Come in, Major Kovalyov is here," said Kovalyov, jumping up hurriedly and opening the door.

There walked in a police officer of handsome appearance, with whiskers neither too fair nor too dark, and rather fat cheeks, the very one who at the beginning of our story was standing at the end of St. Isaac's Bridge.

"You have been pleased to lose your nose, sir?"

"That is so."

"It is now found."

"What are you saying?" cried Major Kovalyov. He could not speak for joy. He gazed open-eyed at the police officer standing before him, on whose full lips and cheeks the flickering light of the candle was brightly reflected. "How?"

"By a strange chance: he was caught almost on the road. He had already taken his seat in the diligence and was intending to go to Riga, and had already taken a passport in the name of a government clerk. And the strange thing is that I myself took him for a gentleman at first, but fortunately I had my spectacles with me and I soon saw that it was a nose. You know I am short-sighted. And if you stand before me I only see that you have a face, but I don't notice your nose or your beard or anything. My mother-in-law, that is my wife's mother, doesn't see anything either."

Kovalyov was beside himself with joy. "Where? Where? I'll run at once."

"Don't disturb yourself. Knowing that you were in need of it I brought it along with me. And the strange

THE NOSE

thing is that the man who has had the most to do with the affair is a rascal of a barber in the Voznesensky Street, who is now in custody. I have long suspected him of drunkenness and thieving, and only the day before yesterday he carried off a strip of buttons from one shop. Your nose is exactly as it was." With this the police officer put his hand in his pocket and drew out the nose just as it was.

"That's it!" Kovalyov cried. "That's certainly it. You must have a cup of tea with me this evening."

"I should look upon it as a great pleasure, but I can't possibly manage it: I have to go from here to the penitentiary. . . . How the prices of all provisions are going up! . . . At home I have my mother-in-law, that is my wife's mother, and my children, the eldest particularly gives signs of great promise, he is a very intelligent child; but we have absolutely no means for his education. . . ."

For some time after the policeman's departure the collegiate assessor remained in a state of bewilderment, and it was only a few minutes later that he was capable of feeling and understanding again: he was reduced to such stupefaction by this unexpected good fortune. He took the recovered nose carefully in his two hands, holding them together like a cup, and once more examined it attentively.

"Yes, that's it, it's certainly it," said Major Kovalyov. "There's the pimple that came out on the left side yesterday." The major almost laughed aloud with joy.

But nothing in this world is of long duration, and so his joy was not so great the next moment; and the moment after, it was still less, and in the end he passed

THE NOSE

imperceptibly into his ordinary frame of mind, just as a circle on the water caused by a falling stone gradually passes away into the unbroken smoothness of the surface. Kovalyov began to think, and reflected that the business was not finished yet; the nose was found, but it had to be put on, fixed in its proper place.

"And what if it won't stick?" Asking himself this question, the major turned pale.

With a feeling of irrepressible terror he rushed to the table and moved the looking-glass forward that he might not put the nose on crooked. His hands trembled. Cautiously and circumspectly he replaced it in its former position. Oh horror, the nose would not stick on! . . . He put it to his lips, slightly warmed it with his breath, and again applied it to the flat space between his two cheeks; but nothing would make the nose keep on.

"Come, come, stick on, you fool!" he said to it; but the nose seemed made of wood and fell on the table with a strange sound as though it were a cork. The major's face worked convulsively.

"Is it possible that it won't grow on again?" But, however often he applied it to the proper place, the attempt was as unsuccessful as before.

He called Ivan and sent him for a doctor who tenanted the best flat on the first storey of the same house. The doctor was a handsome man, he had magnificent pitch-black whiskers, a fresh and healthy wife, ate fresh apples in the morning and kept his mouth extraordinarily clean, rinsing it out for nearly three-quarters of an hour every morning and cleaning his teeth with five different sorts of brushes. The doctor appeared immediately. Asking how long ago the trouble had oc-

curred, he took Major Kovalyov by the chin and with his thumb gave him a flip on the spot where the nose had been, making the major jerk back his head so abruptly that he knocked the back of it against the wall. The doctor said that that did not matter, and, advising him to move a little away from the wall, he told him to bend his head round first to the right, and feeling the place where the nose had been, said, "H'm!" Then he told him to turn his head round to the left side and again said "H'm!" And in conclusion he gave him again a flip with his thumb, so that Major Kovalyov threw up his head like a horse when his teeth are being looked at. After making this experiment the doctor shook his head and said:—

"No, it's impossible. You had better stay as you are, for it may be made much worse. Of course, it might be stuck on; I could stick it on for you at once, if you like; but I assure you it would be worse for you."

"That's a nice thing to say! How can I stay without a nose?" said Kovalyov. "Things can't possibly be worse than now. It's simply beyond everything. Where can I show myself with such a caricature of a face? I have a good circle of acquaintances. To-day, for instance, I ought to be at two evening parties. I know a great many people; Madame Tchehtarev, the wife of a civil councillor, Madame Podtatchin, an officer's widow . . . though after the way she has behaved, I'll have nothing more to do with her except through the police. Do me a favour," Kovalyov went on in a supplicating voice; "is there no means of sticking it on? Even if it were not neatly done, so long as it would keep on; I could even hold it on

THE NOSE

with my hand at critical moments. I wouldn't dance in any case for fear of a rash movement upsetting it. As for remuneration for your services, you may be assured that as far as my means allow . . ."

"Believe me," said the doctor, in a voice neither loud nor low but persuasive and magnetic, "that I never work from mercenary motives; that is opposed to my principles and my science. It is true that I accept a fee for my visits, but that is simply to avoid wounding my patients by refusing it. Of course I could replace your nose; but I assure you on my honour, since you do not believe my word, that it will be much worse for you. You had better wait for the action of nature itself. Wash it frequently with cold water, and I assure you that even without a nose you will be just as healthy as with one. And I advise you to put the nose in a bottle, in spirits or, better still, put two tablespoofnfuls of sour vodka on it and heated vinegar—and then you might get quite a sum of money for it. I'd even take it myself, if you don't ask too much for it."

"No, no, I wouldn't sell it for anything," Major Kovalyov cried in despair; "I'd rather it were lost than that!"

"Excuse me!" said the doctor, bowing himself out, "I was trying to be of use to you. . . . Well, there is nothing for it! Anyway, you see that I have done my best." Saying this the doctor walked out of the room with a majestic air. Kovalyov did not notice his face, and, almost lost to consciousness, saw nothing but the cuffs of his clean and snow-white shirt peeping out from the sleeves of his black tail-coat.

Next day he decided, before lodging a complaint

THE NOSE

with the police, to write to Madame Podtatchin to see whether she would consent to return him what was needful without a struggle. The letter was as follows:—

DEAR MADAM,

ALEXANDRA GRIGORYEVNA.

I cannot understand this strange conduct on your part. You may rest assured that you will gain nothing by what you have done, and you will not get a step nearer forcing me to marry your daughter. Believe me, that business in regard to my nose is no secret, no more than it is that you and no other are the person chiefly responsible. The sudden parting of the same from its natural position, its flight and masquerading, at one time in the form of a government clerk and finally in its own shape, is nothing else than the consequence of the sorceries practised by you or by those who are versed in the same honourable arts as you are. For my part I consider it my duty to warn you, if the above-mentioned nose is not in its proper place to-day, I shall be obliged to resort to the assistance and protection of the law.

I have, however, with complete respect to you, the honour to be

Your respectful servant,

PLATON KOVALYOV.

DEAR SIR,

PLATON KUZMITCH!

Your letter greatly astonished me. I must frankly confess that I did not expect it, especially in regard to your unjust reproaches. I assure you I have never received the government clerk of whom you speak in my house, neither in masquerade nor in his own attire. It is true that Filipp Ivanovitch Potantchikov has been to see me, and although, indeed, he is asking me for my daughter's hand and is a well conducted, sober man of great learning, I have never encouraged his hopes. You make some reference to your nose also. If you wish me to understand by that that you imagine that I meant to make a long nose at you, that is, to give you a

THE NOSE

formal refusal, I am surprised that you should speak of such a thing when, as you know perfectly well, I was quite of the opposite way of thinking, and if you are courting my daughter with a view to lawful matrimony I am ready to satisfy you immediately, seeing that has always been the object of my keenest desires, in the hope of which I remain always ready to be of service to you.

ALEXANDRA PODTATCHIN.

"No," said Kovalyov to himself after reading the letter, "she really is not to blame. It's impossible. The letter is written as it could not be written by any one guilty of a crime." The collegiate assessor was an expert on this subject, as he had been sent several time to the Caucasus to conduct investigations. "In what way, by what fate, has this happened? Only the devil could make it out!" he said at last, letting his hands fall to his sides.

Meanwhile the rumours of this strange occurrence were spreading all over the town, and of course not without especial additions. Just at that time the minds of all were particularly interested in the marvellous: experiments in the influence of magnetism had been attracting public attention only recently. Moreover, the story of the dancing chair in Konyushenny Street was still fresh, and so there is nothing to be surprised at in the fact that people were soon beginning to say that the nose of a collegiate assessor called Kovalyov was walking along the Nevsky Prospect at exactly three in the afternoon. Numbers of inquisitive people flocked there every day. Somebody said that the nose was in Yunker's shop—and near Yunker's there was such a crowd and such a crush that the police were actually obliged to intervene. One speculator, a man of

THE NOSE

dignified appearance with whiskers, who used to sell all sorts of cakes and tarts at the doors of the theatres, made purposely some very strong wooden benches, which he offered to the curious to stand on, for eighty kopecks each. One very worthy colonel left home earlier on account of it, and with a great deal of trouble made his way through the crowd; but to his great indignation, instead of the nose, he saw in the shop windows the usual woollen vest and a lithograph depicting a girl pulling up her stocking while a foppish young man, with a waist-coat with revers and a small beard, peeps at her from behind a tree; a picture which had been hanging in the same place for more than ten years. As he walked away he said with vexation: "How can people be led astray by such stupid and incredible stories!" Then rumour would have it that it was not on the Nevsky Prospect but in the Tavritchesky Park that Major Kovalyov's nose took its walks abroad; that it had been there for ever so long; that, even when Hozrev-Mirza used to live there, he was greatly surprised at this strange freak of nature. Several students from the Academy of Surgery made their way to the park. One worthy lady of high rank wrote a letter to the superintendent of the park asking him to show her children this rare phenomenon with, if possible, an explanation that should be edifying and instructive for the young.

All the gentlemen who invariably attend social gatherings and like to amuse the ladies were extremely thankful for all these events, for their stock of anecdotes was completely exhausted. A small group of worthy and well-intentioned persons were greatly displeased. One gentleman said with indignation that he

THE NOSE

could not understand how in the present enlightened age people could spread abroad these absurd inventions, and that he was surprised that the government took no notice of it. This gentleman, as may be seen, belonged to the number of those who would like the government to meddle in everything, even in their daily quarrels with their wives. After this . . . but here again the whole adventure is lost in fog, and what happened afterwards is absolutely unknown.

III

What is utterly nonsensical happens in the world. Sometimes there is not the slightest resemblance to truth about it: all at once that very nose which had been driving about the place in the form of a civil councillor, and had made such a stir in the town, turned up again as though nothing had happened, in its proper place, that is, precisely between the two cheeks of Major Kovalyov. This took place on the seventh of April. Waking up and casually glancing into the looking-glass, he sees—his nose! puts up his hands, actually his nose! “Aha!” said Kovalyov, and in his joy he almost danced a jig barefoot about his room; but the entrance of Ivan checked him. He ordered the latter to bring him water at once, and as he washed he glanced once more into the looking-glass—the nose! As he wiped himself with the towel he glanced again into the looking-glass—the nose!

“Look, Ivan, I fancy I have a pimple on my nose,” he said, while he thought: “How dreadful if Ivan says ‘No, indeed, sir, there’s no pimple and, indeed, there is no nose either!’ ”

THE NOSE

But Ivan said: "There is nothing, there is no pimple: your nose is quite clear!"

"Good, dash it all!" the major said to himself, and he snapped his fingers.

At that moment Ivan Yakovlevitch the barber peeped in at the door, but as timidly as a cat who has just been beaten for stealing the bacon.

"Tell me first: are your hands clean?" Kovalyov shouted to him while he was still some way off.

"Yes."

"You are lying!"

"Upon my word, they are clean, sir."

"Well, mind now."

Kovalyov sat down. Ivan Yakovlevitch covered him up with a towel, and in one instant with the aid of his brushes had smothered the whole of his beard and part of his cheek in cream, like that which is served at merchants' name-day parties.

"My eye!" Ivan Yakovlevitch said to himself, glancing at the nose and then turning his customer's head on the other side and looking at it sideways. "There it is, sure enough. What can it mean?" He went on pondering, and for a long while he gazed at the nose. At last, lightly, with a cautiousness which may well be imagined, he raised two fingers to take it by the tip. Such was Ivan Yakovlevitch's system.

"Now, now, now, mind!" cried Kovalyov. Ivan Yakovlevitch let his hands drop, and was flustered and confused as he had never been confused before. At last he began circumspectly tickling him with the razor under his beard, and, although it was difficult and not at all handy for him to shave without holding on to the olfactory portion of the face, yet he did at

THE NOSE

last somehow, pressing his rough thumb into his cheek and lower jaw, overcome all difficulties, and finish shaving him.

When it was all over, Kovalyov at once made haste to dress, took a cab, and drove to the confectioner's shop. Before he was inside the door he shouted: "Waiter, a cup of chocolate!" and at the same instant peeped at himself in the looking-glass. The nose was there. He turned round gaily and, with a satirical air, slightly screwing up his eyes, looked at two military men, one of whom had a nose hardly bigger than a waistcoat button. After that he set off for the office of the department, in which he was urging his claims to a post as vice-governor or, failing that, the post of an executive clerk. After crossing the waiting-room he glanced at the mirror; the nose was there. Then he drove to see another collegiate assessor or major, who was much given to making fun of people, and to whom he often said in reply to various sharp observations: "There you are, I know you, you are as sharp as a pin!" On the way he thought: "If even the major does not split with laughter when he sees me, then it is a sure sign that everything is in its place." But the sarcastic collegiate assessor said nothing. "Good, good, dash it all!" Kovalyov thought to himself. On the way he met Madame Podtatchin with her daughter; he was profuse in his bows to them and was greeted with exclamations of delight—so there could be nothing amiss with him, he thought. He conversed with them for a long time and, taking out his snuff-box, purposely put a pinch to each nostril while he said to himself: "So much for you, you petticoats, you hens! but I am not

THE NOSE

going to marry your daughter all the same. Just simply *par amour*—I daresay!”

And from that time forth Major Kovalyov promenaded about, as though nothing had happened, on the Nevsky Prospect, and at the theatres and everywhere. And the nose, too, as though nothing had happened, sat on his face without even a sign of coming off at the sides. And after this Major Kovalyov was always seen in a good humour, smiling, resolutely pursuing all the pretty ladies, and even on one occasion stopping before a shop in the Gostiny Dvor and buying the ribbon of some order, I cannot say with what object, since he was not himself a cavalier of any order.

So this is the strange event that occurred in the Northern capital of our spacious empire! Only now, on thinking it all over, we perceive that there is a great deal that is improbable in it. Apart from the fact that it certainly is strange for a nose supernaturally to leave its place and to appear in various places in the guise of a civil councillor—how was it that Kovalyov did not grasp that he could not advertise about his nose in a newspaper office? I do not mean to say that I should think it too expensive to advertise: that is nonsense, and I am by no means a mercenary person: but it is unseemly, awkward, not nice! And again: how did the nose come into the loaf, and how about Ivan Yakovlevitch himself? . . . no, that I cannot understand, I am absolutely unable to understand it! But what is stranger, what is more uncomprehensible than anything is that authors can choose such subjects. I confess that is quite beyond my grasp, it really is . . . No, no! I cannot understand it at all. In the first place, it is absolutely without profit to the

THE NOSE

fatherland; in the second place . . . but in the second place, too, there is no profit. I really do not know what to say of it. . . .

And yet, with all that, though of course one may admit the first point, the second and the third . . . may even . . . but there, are there not inconsequences everywhere?—and yet, when you think it over, there really is something in it. Whatever any one may say, such things do happen—not often, but they do happen.

THE PORTRAIT

THE PORTRAIT

I

NOWHERE were so many people standing as before the picture shop in Shtchukin Court. The shop did, indeed, present the most varied collection of strange marvels: the pictures were for the most part painted in oil colours, covered with dark-green varnish, in dark-yellow gilt frames. A winter scene with white trees, an absolutely red sunset that looked like the glow of a conflagration, a Flemish peasant with a pike and a broken arm, more like a turkey-cock in frills than a human being—such were usually their subjects. To these must be added some engravings: a portrait of Hozrev-Mirza in a sheepskin cap, and portraits of generals with crooked noses in three-cornered hats.

The doors of such shops are commonly hung with bundles of pictures testifying to the native talent of the Russian. On one of them was the Tsarevna Miliktrissa Kirbityevna, on another the town of Jerusalem, over the houses and churches of which a flood of red colour was flung without stint, covering half the earth, and two Russian peasants in big gloves kneeling in prayer. The purchasers of these creations were commonly few in number, but there was always a crowd looking at them. Some dissipated lackey would usually be gaping before them with dishes from the res-

THE PORTRAIT

taurant in his hand for the dinner of his master, whose soup would certainly not be too hot. A soldier in a greatcoat, a cavalier of Rag Fair, with two penknives to sell, and a pedlar-woman from Ohta with a box filled with slippers would be sure to be standing before them. Each one would show his enthusiasm in his own way: the peasants usually point with their fingers; the soldiers examine them seriously; the footboys and the apprentices laugh and tease each other over the caricatures; old footmen in frieze overcoats stare at them simply to have somewhere to stop and gape, and the pedlar-women, young women from the villages, hasten there by instinct to hear what people are gossiping about and to look at what they are looking at.

The young artist Tchertkov, who was passing by, involuntarily stopped before the shop. His old greatcoat and unfashionable clothes showed that he was a man who sacrificed himself to his work with devotion and had not time to worry himself about dress, which usually has a mysterious attraction for young people. He stopped before the shop, at first inwardly laughing at the grotesque pictures; at last he sank unconsciously into meditation: he began wondering to whom these productions were of use. That the Russian people should gaze at the Yeruslanov Lazarevitches, at dining and drinking scenes, at Foma and Yeremy, did not strike him as surprising: the subjects depicted were well within the grasp and comprehension of the people; but where were the purchasers of these glaring, dirty oil paintings? Who wanted these Flemish peasants, these red-and-blue landscapes which displayed pretensions to a rather high degree of art, though its complete degradation was displayed in them? If only

they had been the works of a child obeying an unconscious impulse, if they had shown no correctness of drawing, if they had not observed even the first principles of mechanical perspective, if everything in them had been in the style of caricature, but yet there had been some gleam of an effort, an impulse to follow nature—but he could find nothing of the sort in them. The complete blankness of senility, or meaningless caprice, or unconscious force, had guided the hand of their creators. Who had worked to produce them? And without doubt they must be the work of one painter, because in all were the same colours, the same mannerism, the same practised, accustomed hand which seemed to belong to a coarsely-fashioned automaton rather than to a man. He still stood before these dirty pictures, gazing at them, and completely unconscious that meanwhile the owner of the picture-shop, a grey little man of fifty in a frieze greatcoat, with a chin that needed shaving, was telling him, "They are first-class pictures and have only just come from the Customs, the varnish is not yet dry on them, and they have not been framed. Look yourself, and I assure you, on my honour, you will be pleased with them."

All these alluring speeches flew by Tchertkov's ears. At last, to encourage the man a little, he picked a few dusty pictures from the floor. They were old family portraits whose heirs perhaps could not be found. Almost mechanically he began wiping the dust off one of them. A light flush suffused his face, the flush that betokens secret pleasure at something unexpected. He began impatiently dusting it, and soon saw a portrait in which a master's hand was unmistakably apparent, though the colours seemed somewhat dim and

THE PORTRAIT

blackened. It was the portrait of an old man with an uneasy and even malicious expression; there was a hard, malignant smile upon his lips, and at the same time there was a look of horror on it; the flush of fever was delicately depicted on the wrinkled face; the eyes were large, black, and lustreless, but at the same time there was a strange look of life in them. It seemed as though the portrait was that of some miser who had spent his life gloating over his money-box, or one of those luckless creatures whose days are passed in troubling the happiness of others. The southern cast of countenance was vividly preserved in it. The swarthy skin, the pitch-black hair, streaked with grey, were never found among the inhabitants of the northern provinces. There was a certain lack of finish about the whole portrait; but, if it had been complete, a connoisseur would have been lost in conjecture how a perfect work of Vandyke had turned up in Russia and found its way into the shop in Shtchukin Court.

With a beating heart the young artist, laying it aside, began turning over the others to see whether he could find anything of the same sort; but all the rest were of quite another world, and only showed that this was a stray visitor who had fallen among them by blind chance. At last Tchertkov inquired the price.

The astute shopkeeper, noticing from his attention that the portrait was of some value, scratched behind his ear, and said: "Well, ten roubles isn't much to ask for it."

Tchertkov put his hand into his pocket.

"I will give eleven!" he heard a voice behind him say. He turned round and saw that a group of people had gathered, and that one gentleman in a cloak

THE PORTRAIT

had, like himself, for some time been standing before the picture. His heart beat violently and his lips quivered, as in a man who feels that an object for which he has been seeking is being taken from him. Looking more closely at the new purchaser, he was somewhat consoled by seeing that his clothes were no less shabby than his own, and he brought out in a shaking voice: "I'll give you twelve roubles; the picture is mine."

"Here's fifteen, put it down to me," cried the other man.

Tchertkov's face worked convulsively, there was a catch in his breath, and he articulated unconsciously, "Twenty roubles."

The merchant rubbed his hands with satisfaction, seeing that the purchasers were running the price up for his benefit. The people pressed more closely round the rivals, scenting at once that an ordinary sale was turning into an auction, which always has attractions even for those who take no part in it. At last the price went up to fifty roubles. Almost in despair Tchertkov cried "Fifty," remembering that that sum was all he had in the world and that part of it he owed for his lodging, and that he needed to buy paints besides, and a few other necessary articles.

His opponent gave way at that point, the sum apparently exceeded his fortune also, and the picture was knocked down to Tchertkov. Taking a fifty-rouble note out of his pocket, he flung it in the shopkeeper's face and was greedily seizing the picture, when all at once he leaped back, overcome with terror. The dark eyes of the portrait had a look so living and at the same time so deathlike that he could not help being terrified. It seemed as though something of life had

by some incredibly strange power been retained in them. They were not painted eyes, they were living, they were human eyes. They were motionless, but perhaps would have been less terrible had they moved. A strange feeling—not terror, but the inexplicable sensation which we feel at the sight of something weird, that seems a breach of ordinary nature, or rather a mad freak of nature—that feeling made almost all present utter a shriek. With a tremor Tchertkov passed his hand over the canvas, but the canvas was flat. The effect produced by the portrait was universal. People scurried out of the shop in terror, the would-be purchaser withdrew timorously. At that moment the shades of night grew thicker, as though to make the incredible thing more awful. Tchertkov could not bring himself to stay another moment. Not daring even to think of taking the picture with him, he ran out into the street. The fresh air, the noise of the traffic, the talk of the people in the street seemed for a minute to revive him, but his heart was still weighed down by an oppressive feeling. Although he looked from side to side at the objects about him, his thoughts were absorbed by one extraordinary phenomenon. “What is it?” he wondered. “Art, or some supernatural sorcery peeping out against all the laws of nature? What a strange, incomprehensible enigma! Or does the highest art bring a man up to the line beyond which he captures what cannot be created by human effort, and snatches something living from the life animating his model? Why is the over-stepping of the line, ordained as the limit for the imagination, so awful? Or is the imagination, the impulse, followed at last by the reality, that awful reality by which the

imagination is thrown off its balance as by an external shock—that awful reality which a man, thirsting for it, finds, when trying to attain to what is fine in man, he arms himself with the dissecting knife, opens the body, and sees what is revolting in man? It is inconceivable! So astounding! So awfully living! Or is too close an imitation of nature as sickly as a dish that has too sweet a taste?”

With such thoughts in his mind, he went into his little room in a small wooden house in Row Fifteen of Vassilyevsky Island, where his studies lay scattered about in every corner, careful and exact copies from the antique, which betrayed the artist's effort to master the fundamental laws and proportions of nature. He spent a long time scrutinising them, till at last his thoughts followed in regular succession and almost took expression in words; so vividly did he feel what he was thinking!

“And here I have been toiling for a year over these dry bones! I am straining every effort to learn what is so wonderfully vouchsafed to great artists and seems to be the fruit of swift momentary inspiration. Under the lightest touch of their brush a man is portrayed free, spontaneous, as he was created by nature, his movements free and unconstrained. This is given to them at once, while all my life I must toil, all my life practise the tedious rudiments, devote all my life to monotonous work that does not correspond with my feelings. Here are my daubs! They are true, they are like the originals, but if I try to produce something of my own, it comes all wrong: the leg does not stand so correctly and easily, the arm is not raised so lightly and freely, the turn of the head will never in my things

THE PORTRAIT

be as natural as in theirs, and the thought, the touches that are beyond words . . . No, I shall never be a great artist."

His reflections were interrupted by the entrance of his servant, a lad of eighteen, in a Russian shirt, with a rosy face and red hair. He began unceremoniously pulling off Tchertkov's boots, while the latter remained lost in thought. This lad in the red shirt was his servant and his model, he cleaned his boots, lounged away his time in the little entry, mixed the colours, and dirtied the floor with his muddy boots. After pulling off his master's boots, he flung him his dressing-gown and was going out of the room, when all at once he turned his head and brought out in a loud voice: "Am I to light the candle, sir?"

"Yes, light it," Tchertkov answered absentmindedly.

"Oh, and the landlord has been here," the grubby servant-lad announced, following the praiseworthy habit, common to all persons of his calling, of referring in a postscript to what was of most importance: "the landlord has been here and he said that, if you do not pay what you owe him, he'll pitch all your pictures out of the window and your bedstead with them."

"Tell the landlord not to worry about the rent," said Tchertkov; "I have got the money."

Saying this he felt for the pocket of his coat, but suddenly remembered that he had left all his money with the picture-dealer for the portrait. He began inwardly reproaching himself for his imprudence in having run out of the shop for no reason whatever, frightened by a trifling incident, without taking either the money or the portrait. He made up his mind to go next day to the dealer and get the money back, thinking that he

THE PORTRAIT

was perfectly justified in countermanding the purchase, especially as his private circumstances did not permit of his indulgence in unnecessary expenditure.

The moonlight lay in a bright white patch upon his floor, covering part of the bed and ending on the wall. All the pictures and other objects in the room seemed to smile, as from time to time their edges caught a gleam of the ever-lovely radiance. At that instant he chanced to glance at the wall, and saw hanging on it the strange portrait that had so struck him in the shop. A faint shudder ran all over him. His first action was to call his servant and ask him how the portrait had come there and who had brought it; but the lad swore that no one had come into the room except the landlord, and that he had been there in the morning and had nothing in his hand but the key. Tchertkov felt the hair rise up on his head. Sitting by the window, he tried to persuade himself that there could be nothing supernatural in it, that his servant might have been asleep at the time, that the picture dealer might have sent the portrait, having happened by some odd chance to find out where he lodged. . . . In short, he began going over all the commonplace explanations to which we resort when we want to prove that something that has happened must have happened as we think. He resolved not to look at the portrait, but involuntarily his head turned towards it and his eyes seemed riveted upon the strange picture. The old man's immovable stare was unendurable: the eyes positively gleamed, seeming to absorb the moonlight, and they were so fearfully lifelike that Tchertkov could not help putting his hand before his eyes. It seemed as though a tear glistened on the old man's eyelashes; the luminous

mist into which the sovereign moon transformed the night increased the effect: the canvas disappeared, and the dreadful face of the old man stood out and seemed gazing out of the frame as though out of a window.

As he ascribed this supernatural effect to the moon, the wonderful light of which has the mysterious quality of giving objects something of the sound and colour of the other world, he told his servant to make haste and bring in the candle by which the lad was at work. But the expression on the face of the portrait was not less vivid: the moonlight, blending with the glow of the candle, gave it an even more incomprehensible and strange look of life. Snatching up a sheet, he began covering the portrait, folding it three times round it, so that no ray of light could get through; but, for all that, either because his imagination had been deeply stirred, or his own eyes, exhausted by overstrain, had some fugitive moving pattern imprinted on them, he fancied for some time that the old man's eyes were gleaming through the sheet. At last he made up his mind to put out the candle and go to bed behind a screen which hid the portrait from him. In vain he waited for sleep; most dismal thoughts dispelled the tranquil state of mind which leads to slumber; depression, annoyance, the landlord asking for money, his poverty, his unfinished pictures—the works of impotent impulse—all danced before his eyes and followed one another in endless succession. And when for a minute he succeeded in driving them away, the strange portrait dominated his imagination, and its murderous eyes seemed to be gleaming at him through a crack in the screen. Never had he felt such a weight of oppression on his soul. The moonlight, in which there is

THE PORTRAIT

so much melody when it breaks into the solitary bedroom of a poet and wafts half-waking dreams of child-like enchantment over his pillow, brought him no melodious dreams; his dreams were those of sickness. At last he sank not into sleep but into a sort of half-forgetfulness, into that oppressive state when with one eye one sees the haunting fancies of dreamland and with the other the objects about one wrapped in a cloak of obscurity.

He saw the figure of the old man detach itself from the portrait and leave it, just as the upper foam is lifted from a frothing liquid, rise in the air and float nearer and nearer to him, till at last it approached his very bedstead. Tchertkov felt his breath stop and tried to sit up; but his arms would not move. The old man's eyes glowed with a dull fire and were fastened upon him with all their magnetic power.

"Do not fear," said the strange old man, and Tchertkov noticed a smile on his lips, which seemed to sting him with its derision and lighted up the dull wrinkles of his face with glaring vividness. "Do not fear me," said the strange apparition; "you and I will never part. You have set to work very stupidly. What possesses you to spend years at the A, B, C, when you might long ago have been reading fluently? Do you suppose that by years of effort you may master art, that you will be successful and may gain something? Yes, you will gain," here his face was strangely distorted and a sort of fixed laugh was apparent in all his wrinkles, "you will gain the enviable right to throw yourself from St. Isaac's Bridge into the Neva or to hang yourself on a nail with a kerchief round your neck; while the first painter who buys your work for a rouble will blot it

out to paint some red face on the canvas. Give up that stupid notion! Everything in the world is done for profit. Make haste and paint portraits of all the town! Accept every commission, but do not be in love with your work; don't sit over it day and night: time flies quickly, and life will not lag behind. The more pictures you finish in the day, the more money there will be in your pocket and the more glory you will win. Give up this garret and take an expensive flat. I like you and so I give you this advice; I will give you money too, only come to me."

Here the same fixed, terrible laugh appeared on the old man's face again.

A shudder of horror passed over Tchertkov and a cold sweat came out on his face. Making a desperate effort, he raised himself on his arm and at last sat up in bed, but the old man's image had grown dim and Tchertkov only saw him go back into his frame. The young man got up uneasily and began walking up and down the room. To revive himself a little, he went to the window. The moonlight was still lying on the roofs and white walls of the houses, though little storm-clouds had begun passing over the sky. All was still except for the distant jingle of a chaise, where some cabman in an unseen alley was asleep, lulled by his lazy nag while waiting for a belated fare. Tchertkov persuaded himself at last that his imagination was overwrought and had brought the creature of his troubled thought before him in his sleep. He went up to the portrait once more; the sheet concealed it completely from his eyes, and it seemed as though only a tiny gleam of light filtered through it. At last he fell asleep and slept till morning.

THE PORTRAIT

When he woke up, he was for a long time in that unpleasant state which overcomes a man after being exposed to charcoal fumes; he had an unpleasant headache. The light was dim in the room, there was a disagreeable damp mist in the air which made its way through the crevices of his windows, covered with pictures or with strained canvases. Soon there came a knock at the door, and the landlord came in together with the local police superintendent, whose appearance is to humble people as disturbing as the ingratiating face of a petitioner is to the wealthy.

The landlord of the little house in which Tchertkov lodged belonged to the class of persons who are commonly owners of houses in the Fifteenth Row in Vassily Island, on the Petersburg Side, or in a remote corner of Kolomna, persons who are numerous in Russia and whose character is as difficult to describe as the colour of a threadbare overcoat. In his youth he had been a captain in the army, a loud-voiced bully, and had also been engaged in civilian pursuits, was a capital hand at administering a sound thrashing, and was at the same time a sharp fellow, a dandy and a fool, but in his old age he blended all these striking peculiarities into a sort of dingy indefiniteness. He was a widower, was on the shelf, was no longer spruce, neither bragged nor quarrelled, was fond of his cup of tea, and of babbling all sorts of nonsense over it; he walked about his room snuffing the candle ends; punctually every month called on his lodgers for the rent; went out into the street with a key in his hand to have a look at the roof of his house; continually routed out the house-porter from the cupboard in which the latter used to secrete himself for a nap: in short he was on

the shelf, a man who from all the ups and downs of his turbulent existence had retained nothing but vulgar habits.

"Please take the necessary steps and tell him," said the landlord, addressing the police superintendent.

"It is my duty to tell you," said the police superintendent, putting his hand on the buttonhole of his uniform, "that you must pay the three months' rent you owe."

"I should be glad to pay, but what am I to do if I have not the money," said Tchertkov coolly.

"In that case the landlord must seize some of your goods for the value of the rent, and you must turn out to-day."

"Take anything you like," Tchertkov answered almost unconsciously.

"Many of the pictures are not badly painted," the police superintendent went on, turning over some of them; "it is only a pity that they are not finished; and the colours are not very vivid. I suppose being short of money you could not buy the paints, but what is that picture wrapped up in linen?"

Saying this, the police superintendent going up to the picture pulled the sheet off it without more ado, for these gentry always permit themselves a little freedom when they see people quite defenceless or poor. The portrait seemed to surprise him, for the extraordinarily living eyes produced the same effect on everybody. As he examined the picture, he grasped the frame rather tightly and, as the hands of the guardians of law and order are always rather used to rough work, the frame suddenly cracked; a little slip of wood dropped out together with a roll of gold coins, which

fell with a chink on the floor and several gleaming discs rolled in all directions. Tchertkov flew greedily to pick them up, and snatched from the policeman's hand those he had already collected.

"How is it you say that you have no money to pay the rent?" observed the police superintendent, smiling agreeably, "when you have all this gold?"

"That money is sacred to me!" cried Tchertkov, in apprehension of the policeman's adroit hands. "I ought to keep it, it was entrusted to me by my dead father. However, to satisfy you, here is your rent!" with this he threw a few gold pieces to the landlord.

The countenance and manners of the landlord and of the worthy guardian of drunken cabmen's morals were instantly transformed.

The policeman began apologising and assuring him that he had merely carried out the prescribed formalities and had of course no right to constrain him, and, to convince Tchertkov of this more thoroughly, he offered him a pinch of snuff. The landlord declared that he had only been joking, and declared it with the oaths and shamelessness of a shopkeeper in the Gostiny Dvor.

Tchertkov ran away and made up his mind not to remain in the lodgings. He had not even time to think over the strangeness of this adventure. Examining the roll of money, he found that it contained more than a hundred gold pieces. The first thing he did was to take a smart flat, which seemed as though it had been prepared expressly for him. There were four lofty rooms, side by side, large windows, and every advantage and convenience for an artist! As he lay on the sofa and looked out of the windows—all whole

and unbroken—at the sea of people ebbing and flowing outside, he sank into a self-complacent forgetfulness, and marvelled at the fate that had befallen him only the day before in his garret. His finished and unfinished pictures hung about on the spacious and elegant walls; among them hung the mysterious portrait which had come into his hands in such a unique way. He fell again to wondering what was the reason of the extraordinary look of life in the eyes. His thoughts turned to his half-waking dream and at last to the marvellous treasure concealed in the frame. All this led him to believe that there was some story connected with the picture, and even perhaps that his own existence was bound up with the portrait. He jumped off the sofa and began examining it attentively; there was a drawer in the frame covered with a thin slip of wood, so skillfully made and smoothed off on the surface that no one could have discovered its existence had not the heavy finger of the police superintendent pressed on the slip of wood. He put it back in its place and looked at it once more. The look of life in the eyes had not struck him as so terrible in the bright light that filled his room from the large windows, and in the noise of the crowded streets that thundered upon his ears; but there was something unpleasant in it, he tried to turn away as soon as possible.

At that moment there was a ring at the door, and a dignified elderly lady with a waist like a wineglass walked in, accompanied by a young girl of eighteen; a flunkey in gorgeous livery opened the door for them and remained standing in the vestibule.

"I have come to ask you a favour," the lady brought out in the caressing tone in which ladies usually con-

THE PORTRAIT

verse with artists, French hairdressers, and such people, born to give pleasure to others. "I have heard of your talent. . . ." (Tchertkov wondered that he had so quickly become famous.) "I want you to paint my daughter's portrait."

At this the daughter's pale face turned towards the artist who, had he been a connoisseur of the heart, could have read her brief story at once in it—the childest passion for balls, the depression and boredom during the long period of waiting before dinner and after dinner, the eagerness to run off to some crowded promenade, dressed in the latest fashion, the impatience to see her girl-friend so as to say to her, "Oh, my dear, how bored I was," or to describe the flounces some Madame Sihler had put on Princess B.'s new gown. . . . That was all that could be read on the young visitor's pale, almost expressionless, face, which wore a shade of sickly sallowness.

"I should be glad if you could set to work at once," the lady went on; "we can spare you an hour."

Tchertkov flew to get his paints and brushes, took a canvas he had ready, and settled himself, prepared to begin.

"I ought to tell you a little about Annette," said the lady, "and that will make your work a little easier. A yearning look has always been observed in her eyes and, indeed, in all her features. My Annette is very emotional, and I must own I never let her read the new novels." (The artist gazed at the girl intently, but did not observe the yearning look.) "I should like you to paint her simply, in the family circle, or, better still, alone in the open air in the shade of a green tree, that nothing might suggest that she was

going to a ball. I must own that our balls are so tiresome and so killing to the soul that I really do not understand what pleasure is to be found in them!" said the elderly lady.

But the daughter's face and even the harsh features of the worthy lady herself betrayed that they never missed a single ball.

Tchertkov was for a moment uncertain how to combine these slight incongruities, but at last he decided to take a prudent middle course. Moreover, he was attracted by the desire to overcome difficulties and to be triumphantly successful while preserving an ambiguous expression.

His brush flung upon the canvas the first misty artistic chaos; from it the features began slowly to stand out and take shape. He was completely absorbed in his sitter, and was beginning to catch those elusive traits which in a good portrait give even to the most uninteresting face a certain character that is the highest triumph of truth. He was overcome by a sweet tremor as he felt that at last he had discerned and was perhaps reproducing what is not often successfully expressed. This eager and ever-mounting joy is known only to talent. Under his brush the face in the portrait seemed spontaneously to acquire the colouring which was a sudden revelation to himself; but the sitter began fidgetting and yawning so violently that it was hard for the still inexperienced artist to catch the permanent expression.

"I think it is enough for the first time," observed the elderly lady.

Good God, how awful it was! His spirit and his powers were stirred and eager to have their full fling.

THE PORTRAIT

Throwing down the palette, the artist stood before the picture, his head hanging.

"I was told, though, that you would finish a portrait in two sittings," observed the lady, going up to the picture, "but so far you have nothing but the rough sketch. We will come to you to-morrow at the same time."

The artist saw his visitors out in silence and remained plunged in disagreeable reflections. In his garret no one had interrupted him when he was sitting over his unbespoken work. With vexation he moved away the portrait he had begun and meant to take up other unfinished work. But how is it possible for the thought and feeling that is saturated with one subject to become absorbed in fresh ones which have not yet fascinated the imagination? Putting down his brush he went out of the house.

Youth is happy in having a number of paths before it, and having thousands of different pleasures open before its eager fresh spirit; and so Tchertkov's mind was diverted almost instantly. What is not within the grasp of youth brimming over with vigour when there are a few gold pieces in the pocket? Moreover, a Russian, and particularly a Russian nobleman or artist, has a strange peculiarity: as soon as he has a kopeck in his pocket he throws prudence to the winds and has no care for the future. He had about thirty gold pieces left after paying in advance for his flat, and all those thirty gold pieces he spent in one evening. First of all, he ordered a very good dinner, emptied two bottles of wine and did not trouble to pick up his change, hired a smart carriage to drive to the theatre which was only a few steps from his

THE PORTRAIT

flat, regaled three of his friends in a restaurant, went off to other places of entertainment, and returned home without a farthing in his pocket. Getting into bed he fell into a sound sleep, but his dreams were incoherent; and as on that first night his chest felt oppressed as though there were something heavy upon it. He saw through the crack of the screen the old man's semblance part from the canvas and count over heaps of money with an expression of uneasiness. The gold fell dropping from his hands. . . . Tchertkov's eyes glowed; it seemed as though his heart found in the gold an unutterable charm which had till then been unknown to him. The old man beckoned him with his finger and showed him a whole heap of gold pieces. Tchertkov stretched out his hand convulsively and woke up. Getting up, he went to the portrait, shook it, cut all the frame about with a penknife, but found no money hidden in it; at last he gave it up and made up his mind to work, vowing not to spend too long over his pictures and not to let his alluring brush run away with him.

At that moment the same lady with her pale Annette arrived again. The artist put the portrait on the easel and this time his brush moved more rapidly. The sunny day and bright lighting gave a special expression to the sitter and revealed a number of delicate points hitherto unnoticed. His soul was fired to intense effort again. He strove to catch the tiniest point and line, even the very sallowness and uneven change of colour in the face of the yawning and exhausted beauty, with the exactitude which inexperienced artists permit themselves, imagining that the truth will be as pleasing to others as it is to themselves. His brush

THE PORTRAIT

was only just attempting to catch the expression of the whole when the annoying "Enough" rang out about his ears, and the lady went up to the portrait.

"Oh! my goodness! what have you done?" she cried with vexation. "You have made Annette yellow; there are dark patches under her eyes; she looks as though she had taken several bottles of medicine. Do, for mercy's sake, alter your portrait; that's not her face at all. We will be with you to-morrow at the same time."

Tchertkov threw down the brush with annoyance; he cursed himself and art and the amiable lady and her daughter and the whole world. He sat hungry in his magnificent room and had not the energy to work at one of his pictures. Next morning, getting up early, he seized the first sketch he came across, which happened to be a study of Psyche he had begun long before, and set it on an easel with the intention of forcing himself to go on with it. At that moment the lady came in again.

"Oh, Annette! Look, look here!" cried the lady, looking delighted. "Oh, how like! charming! charming! The nose, and the mouth, and the brows! How can we thank you for the charming surprise? How sweet it is! How nice the way that hand is just a little raised. I see that you really are as great an artist as we were told."

Tchertkov stood aghast, seeing that the lady had taken his Psyche for a portrait of her daughter. With the modest shyness of a notice, he began assuring them he was trying to picture Psyche in this poor sketch; but the daughter took that as a compliment and gave him a rather sweet smile; the mother smiled too. A

fiendish thought flashed through the artist's mind, a feeling of anger and vexation strengthened it, and he made up his mind to take advantage of this misunderstanding.

"Allow me to ask you to sit a little longer to-day," he observed, addressing the fair girl, who was for once good-humoured. "You see that I have not yet touched the dress at all, because I wanted to do all that with great exactness from nature." He quickly clothed his Psyche in the costume of the nineteenth century, slightly touched the eyes and lips, made the hair a little lighter, and handed the portrait to his visitors. A roll of notes and a gracious smile of gratitude were his reward.

But the artist stood as though rooted to the spot; his conscience pricked him. He was overcome by that fastidious, sensitive apprehension for his good name felt by a young man who bears within him the dignity of talent and is forced by it, if not to destroy, at least to conceal from the world the works in which he sees imperfections, and rather to endure the contempt of the crowd than the contempt of the true connoisseur. He fancied that a stern judge was already standing before his picture, shaking his head and reproaching him for shamelessness and lack of talent. What would he not have given to get the picture back again! He wanted to run after the lady, to snatch the portrait out of her hand, to tear it to pieces and trample it underfoot, but how was he to do it? where was he to go? He did not even know his visitors' surname!

From that day, however, a happy change took place in his fortunes. He expected that his name would be covered with ignominy, but what happened was exactly

THE PORTRAIT

the opposite. The lady who had commissioned him to paint the portrait talked with enthusiasm of the extraordinary artist, and our Tchertkov's studio was crowded with visitors, eager to double, and even if possible to increase tenfold, his rate of production. But being still fresh and innocent, feeling in his heart that he was not competent to undertake so much work, Tchertkov, by way of expiation and effacement of his sin, determined to do his very best with his work, to redouble his efforts, and so to perform miracles. But his good resolutions met with unforeseen obstacles: the sitters whose portraits he had to paint were for the most part impatient people, busy and hurried, and, as soon as his brush was beginning to create something not quite commonplace, he would be weighed down by another sitter, who held his head erect with a very dignified air, burning with eagerness to see it on the canvas; and the artist made haste to finish what he was doing. At last his time was so broken up that he never had a minute to give to reflection; and inspiration, continually strangled at its very source, ceased at last to visit him. In the end, to make his work more rapid, he took to confining himself to familiar, unvaried, and hackneyed forms. Soon his portraits were like the family portraits of old artists which are so often to be met with in every country of Europe and indeed in every corner of the world, in which ladies are painted with their arms folded across their bosoms and a flower in one hand, and gentlemen in uniforms with one hand on a button. Sometimes he wanted to give his sitter a new, unhackneyed position, which would have shown originality and spontaneity, but alas! everything light and spontaneous in the work

THE PORTRAIT

of poet or artist, far from being spontaneously attained, is the fruit of great effort. For an artist to give a new, bold expression to his work, to discover a new secret in the art of painting, he must devote long hours to thought, turning his eyes away from everything surrounding him and shutting himself off from life and from everything worldly. But he had no time to do this, and, moreover, he was too exhausted by his daily toil to be in a fit state to receive inspiration; the world from which he painted his portraits was too commonplace and of one pattern to stir and stimulate the imagination. The set face of the director of a government department with its air of profound severity, the red face of the captain of Uhlans, for ever the same, the pale, artificially smiling countenance of the Petersburg beauty, and a number of others all extremely commonplace made up the show that passed every day before our artist's eyes. It seemed as though his brush itself acquired at last the colourlessness and absence of vitality which distinguished his models.

The bank-notes and gold which were unceasingly passing through his hands in the long run tarnished the pure impulse of his soul. He took shameless advantage of the weakness of his sitters, who for the sake of some beautifying touch added by the artist to their portraits were ready to forgive him all defects, even though that touch might be to the detriment of the likeness.

Tchertkov at last became a really fashionable painter. All Petersburg flocked to him; his portraits were to be seen in every study, bedroom, drawing-room, and boudoir. True artists shrugged their shoulders looking at this spoilt darling of fortune. In

THE PORTRAIT

vain they strove to discover in him one touch of real truth to nature springing from the heat of inspiration; they found nothing but correct and almost always good-looking faces, for the artist still retained a conception of beauty, though he had no knowledge of the heart, of the passions, or even of the habits of men—nothing of what would have betrayed great development of delicate taste. Some who knew Tchertkov wondered at this strange development, for they had seen some talent in his early studies, and they tried to solve the inexplicable question how a man's gifts could disappear in the hey-day of his power instead of developing into full brilliance.

But the self-satisfied artist heard nothing of this criticism; he congratulated himself on his renown as he jingled his gold pieces, and began to believe that everything in the world is commonplace and simple, that there is no such thing as revelation from on high, and that everything essential can be brought under the stern principles of correctness and uniformity. Already he was reaching that time of life when everything inspired by impulse contracts in a man, when the strains of the mighty violin rouse feebler echoes in the soul and its pure notes no longer thrill the heart, when the touch of beauty no longer turns its virgin forces into fire and flame, but all the burnt-out feelings grow more responsive to the jingle of gold, listen more attentively to its alluring music, and, little by little, imperceptibly permit it to absorb them. Fame cannot satisfy and give pleasure to one who has stolen and not observed it; it produces a permanent thrill only in those worthy of it. And therefore all his feelings and his impulses turned to gold. Gold

THE PORTRAIT

became his passion, his ideal, his terror, his pleasure, his goal. Piles of notes grew in his boxes and, like every one to whom this terrible privilege is vouchsafed, he began to grow tedious, inaccessible to everything, indifferent to everything. It seemed as though he were on the point of being transformed into one of those strange beings, sometimes to be found in the world, at whom a man full of energy and passion looks with horror, seeing in them living corpses. But one circumstance made a violent impression upon him and gave a different turn to his life.

One day he saw on his table a note in which the Academy of Arts invited him as an honoured member to come and give his criticism on the work of a Russian painter, who had sent it from Italy where he was studying. This artist was one of his old fellow-students, who had from his earliest years cherished a passion for art, had devoted himself to it with the ardent soul of a patient worker, and, tearing himself away from friends, from relations, from cherished habits, had hastened without means to a strange land; he had endured poverty, humiliation, even hunger; but with rare self-sacrifice had remained regardless of everything, insensible to everything, except his cherished art.

When Tchertkov went into the hall, he found a crowd of visitors already gathered about the picture. A profound silence prevailed such as is rare in a large assembly of critics. He hastened to assume the important air of a connoisseur, as he advanced to the picture, but, good heavens! what did he see!

Pure, stainless, lovely as a bride, the painter's work stood before him. And not the faintest sign of desire to dazzle, of pardonable vanity, even of any

THE PORTRAIT

thought of showing off to the crowd could be seen in it! It excelled with modesty. It was simple, innocent, divine as talent, as genius. The amazingly lovely figures were grouped unconstrainedly, freely, as it were not touching the canvas, and seemed to be modestly casting down their lovely eyelashes in amazement at so many eyes fixed upon them. The features of these godlike faces seemed to be breathing with the mysteries which the soul has no power, no means to convey to another: the inexpressible found serene expression in them; and all this was flung on to the canvas so lightly, with such modest freedom, that it might have seemed the fruit of a moment's inspiration dawning upon the artist's mind. The whole picture was a moment, but it was the moment for which all human life had been but preparation. Involuntary tears were ready to start to the eyes of the visitors who stood round the picture. It seemed as though all tastes, all sorts of wilful misguided diversities of taste, were blended into a silent hymn of praise. Tchertkov stood motionless, open-mouthed before the picture, and as the onlookers and connoisseurs gradually began to break the silence and discuss the qualities of the work and finally turned to him asking for his opinion, he came to himself; he tried to regain his ordinary air of indifference, tried to utter the commonplace vulgar criticisms of blasé artists: to observe that the picture was good and that the artist had talent, but it was to be regretted that the idea was not perfectly carried out in certain details—but the words died on his lips, confused tears and sobs broke from him in response, and he ran out of the hall like one possessed.

For a minute he stood senseless and motionless in the

middle of his magnificent studio. His whole being, his whole life had been awakened in one instant, as though his youth had come back to him, as though the smouldering sparks of talent had burst into flame again. Good God! and to have ruined so ruthlessly all the best years of his youth, to have destroyed, to have quenched the spark of fire that glowed perhaps in his breast, that would perhaps by now have developed into greatness and beauty, that would perhaps in the same way have wrung tears of amazement and gratitude from the eyes of beholders! And to have ruined it all, to have ruined it without mercy! It seemed as though at that moment the impulses and strivings that had once been familiar revived in his soul. He snatched up a brush and approached a canvas. The sweat of effort came out on his brow, he was all absorbed in one desire and might be said to be glowing with one thought: he longed to paint a fallen angel. No idea could have been more in harmony with his present frame of mind. But, alas! his figures, his attitudes, his groupings, his thoughts were artificial and disconnected. His painting and his imagination had been too long confined to one pattern; and a feeble impulse to escape from the limits and fetters he had laid upon himself ended in inaccuracy and failure. He had disdained the wearisome, long ladder of steady work and the first fundamental laws of future greatness. In vexation he took out of the room all his works marked by the deadly pallor of superficial fashion, locked the door, gave orders that no one should be admitted, and set to work with the ardour of youth. But alas! at every step he was pulled up by ignorance of the most fundamental elements; the humble, insignif-

icant mechanism of his art cooled all his ardour, and stood an impassible barrier before his imagination. Sometimes a sudden phantom of a great idea loomed before him, his imagination saw in dark perspective something that caught and flung upon the canvas might have become extraordinary and at the same time within the grasp of every soul; some star of the marvellous gleamed in the vague mist of his thoughts, for he really bore within him the phantom of a talent. But, good heavens! some insignificant essential familiar to a student, some dead rule of anatomy—and the thought failed, the impulse of the impotent imagination was fettered, unexpressed, unportrayed. His brush involuntarily returned to hackneyed forms, his hands went back to his stereotyped manner. The heads dared not take an original attitude, the very folds of the garments insisted on being commonplace and refused to drape and hang on unfamiliar poses of the body. And he felt it, he felt it and saw it himself! . . . The sweat ran down him in great drops, his lips quivered, and, after a long pause during which all his feelings were in revolt within him, he set to work again; but when a man is over thirty it is more difficult to study the hard rules of anatomy, and it is still harder to attain all at once what is developed slowly and is gained after long effort and great labour by deep self-sacrifice. At last he came to know that terrible torture which appears sometimes, a striking exception in nature, when a feeble talent tries to rise above its limit and cannot—that torture which in youth brings forth greatness, but in one who has passed the bounds of dream-land turns to fruitless yearning—that terrible torture which makes a man capable of

THE PORTRAIT

awful deeds. He was possessed by a horrible envy, an envy that verged on frenzy. A look of venom came into his face when he saw a work that bore the stamp of talent. He ground his teeth and devoured it with the eyes of a basilisk. At last the most hellish design which the heart of man has ever cherished sprang up within him, and with frenzied violence he flew to carry it out. He began buying up all the finest works of art. After buying a picture at a high price, he carried it home carefully to his room and with the fury of a tiger fell upon it, tore it, rent it, cut it up into little scraps and stamped on it, accompanying this with a horrid laugh of fiendish glee.

Whenever the work of a new artist appeared which revealed talent, he did everything in his power at all cost to buy it. The immense wealth he had amassed provided him with the means for gratifying this fiendish passion. He untied all his bags of gold and unlocked his chests. No ignorant monster destroyed so many fine works as were destroyed by his savage revenge. And people who bore within them the spark of divine understanding, eager only for what is great, were mercilessly and inhumanly deprived of those holy, splendid works in which great art has lifted the veil from heaven and revealed to man a part of his inner world, full of sounds and holy secrets. Nowhere and in no corner could they hide from his rapacious passion that knew no ruth. His fiery, eagle eye penetrated everywhere and found traces of an artist's brush even among dust and neglect. At all auctions, as soon as he appeared, every one despaired at once of obtaining any work of art. It seemed as though Heaven, moved to wrath, had sent this awful scourge

THE PORTRAIT

upon the earth expressly to take from it all its harmony. This awful passion left traces on his face: it was almost always tinged with the sickly hue of jealousy; there was a gleam in his eye that was almost insane; his scowling brows and the deep lines that were never smoothed from his forehead gave him a wild look, and marked him off from peaceful dwellers upon earth.

Fortunately for the world and for art, such an overstrained and unnatural life could not last long; its passions were too abnormal and colossal for his feeble strength. Fits of frenzy and madness began to be frequent, and at last it ended in a terrible illness. Acute fever, combined with galloping consumption, took such violent hold on him that in three days he was only the shadow of his former self. And to this was added all the symptoms of hopeless insanity. Sometimes it needed several men to hold him. He began to be haunted by the long-forgotten, living eyes of the strange portrait, and then his frenzy was terrible. All the people who stood round his bed seemed to him like dreadful portraits. The portrait was doubled, quadrupled before his eyes, and at last he imagined that all the walls were hung with these awful portraits, all fastening upon him their unmoving, living eyes. Terrible portraits looked at him from the ceiling, from the floor, and to crown it all he saw the room grow larger and extend away into space to give more room for these staring eyes. The doctor who had undertaken to treat him, and who had heard something of his strange story, did all he could to discover the mysterious connection between the hallucinations that haunted him and the incidents of his life, but

THE PORTRAIT

could not arrive at anything. The patient understood nothing and felt nothing but his sufferings, and in a piercing, indescribable, heart-rending voice screamed and implored that they would take away the haunting portrait with the living eyes, the whereabouts of which he described with an exactitude of detail strange in the mouth of a madman. All efforts to find this portrait were in vain. Everything in the house was turned upside down, but the portrait was not found. Then the patient would sit up in bed uneasily and again begin to describe where it was with a preciseness which proved the presence of clear and penetrating thought; but all search was in vain. At last the doctor came to the conclusion that it was only a special form of madness. Soon his life was cut short by a final paroxysm of speechless agony. His corpse was dreadful to behold. Nor could they find any trace of his vast wealth, but, seeing the torn up shreds of the great masterpieces of art, the price of which reached millions, they understood the terrible uses to which it had been put.

II

Masses of carriages, chaises, and coaches were standing round the entrance of the house in which an auction was taking place. It was a sale of all the belongings of one of those wealthy art connoisseurs who sweetly slumber away their lives plunged in zephyrs and amours, who are naïvely reputed to be Mæcenases, and good-naturedly spend on keeping up that reputation the millions accumulated by their business-like fathers, and often, indeed, by their own earlier labours.

THE PORTRAIT

The long drawing-room was filled with the most mixed crowd of visitors, who had come swooping down like birds of prey on an abandoned body. Here was a regular flotilla of Russian merchants from the Arcade and even from the market, in dark-blue coats of German cut. They had here a harder and more free-and-easy air and appearance, and were not marked by the mawkish servility which is so prominent a feature of the Russian merchant. They did not stand on ceremony, in spite of the fact that there were in the room many distinguished aristocrats, before whom in any other place they would have been ready to bow down to the ground till they swept away the dust brought in by their own boots. Here they were completely at their ease, and fingered books and pictures without ceremony, trying to feel the quality of the goods, and boldly outbid aristocratic connoisseurs. Here were many of those persons who are invariably seen at auctions, who make it a rule to attend one at lunch-time every day; distinguished connoisseurs who look upon it as a duty not to miss a chance of increasing their collections, and have nothing else to do between twelve and one o'clock; and finally there were those excellent gentlemen whose coats and pockets are not well-lined but who turn up every day at such functions with no interested motives, solely to see how things will go: who would give more and who less, who would outbid whom, and to whom the goods would be knocked down. Many of the pictures had been flung down here and there without any system; they were mixed up with the furniture and books, which all bore the crest of their owner, though he probably had not had the laudable curiosity to look into them. Chinese vases, mar-

THE PORTRAIT

ble table-tops, furniture both modern and old-fashioned with bent lines adorned with the paws of griffins, sphinxes, and lions, chandeliers gilt and not gilt, and knick-knacks of all sorts were heaped up together, not arranged in order as in shops. It was a chaos of works of art. As a rule the impression made by an auction is queer. There is something in it suggestive of a funeral procession. The room in which it takes place is always rather gloomy, the windows are blocked up with furniture and pictures, the light filters in sparingly; there is silent attention on all the faces, and the sounds: "A hundred roubles, a rouble and twenty kopecks, four hundred roubles and fifty kopecks," dropping emphatically from the lips, fall strangely on the ear. And the effect of a funeral procession is enhanced by the voice of the auctioneer, as he taps with his hammer and performs the funeral service over the poor works of art so strangely gathered together.

The auction had not yet begun, however; the company were looking at various objects that were lying in a heap on the floor. Meanwhile a small group stood before one picture: it was the portrait of an old man with such strangely lifelike eyes that it could not but rivet their attention. The genuine talent of the painter could not be denied; though the work was unfinished, it bore the unmistakable stamp of a powerful hand; at the same time, the supernaturally living eyes could not but call forth criticism. They felt it was the acme of truth, that only a genius could have portrayed it in such perfection, but that genius had too audaciously overstepped the limits set for man. Their rapt attention was interrupted by a sudden exclamation from

THE PORTRAIT

an elderly gentleman: "Ah, there it is!" he cried out in great agitation, and fixed his eyes upon the portrait. Such an exclamation naturally excited general curiosity, and several of those who were looking at it could not resist saying to him: "You must know something about that portrait?"

"You are not mistaken," answered the man who had uttered the exclamation. "Certainly, I know more than any one of the history of that portrait. Everything convinces me that it must be the portrait of which I am going to speak. As I see you are all interested to hear about it, I am ready to satisfy you."

The onlookers bent their heads in token of gratitude, and prepared to listen with great attention.

"Doubtless some of you," he began, "know well that part of the town which is called Kolomna. It has marked characteristics that distinguish it from other parts of the town. The manners, the occupations, the position, and the habits of its residents are quite distinct from those of other parts of the town. Nothing in it is like the capital; on the other hand, nothing in it is like a provincial town, because the disharmony of a many-sided and, if I may so express it, civilized life has penetrated even there and shows itself in the delicate trifles to which only a populous city can give rise. In it there is quite another world, and as you drive into the deserted Kolomna streets you seem to feel the desires and impulses of youth deserting you. There is no glimpse of a bright and buoyant future there. There everything is quiet and suggestive of retirement from active life. There is all the sediment from the ferment of a town. And, indeed, it is the refuge of retired clerks whose pensions do not exceed five hundred

THE PORTRAIT

roubles; of widows who lived in old days on their husbands' work, of persons of small means who have in the past made an agreeable acquaintance with the senate and so condemned themselves to this district for their whole lives; of cooks who have retired and spend the whole day haggling in the market, gossiping with the peasants in the milkshop, buying five kopecks' worth of coffee and four kopecks' worth of sugar every day; and all that class of people, whom I call ashen, whose clothes and faces and hair all have a dingy appearance like ashes. They are like a grey day when the sun does not dazzle with its brilliance, nor the storm whistle with thunder, rain, and hail, but when the sky is neither one thing nor the other: there is a veil of mist that blurs the outline of every object. The faces of these people are a reddish-rusty colour, their hair is reddish too; their eyes are almost always lustreless, their clothes too, are always a dull drab, and suggest the muddy colour that is produced by mixing all the paints together—in fact, their whole exterior is drab. We may reckon in the same class the retired orchestra conductors, the discharged titular councillors of fifty, the retired sons of Mars, with a pension of two hundred roubles, with a swollen lip or an eye knocked out. These people are quite without passions: nothing matters to them: they go about without taking the slightest notice of anything, and remain quite silent thinking of nothing at all. In their room they have nothing but a bedstead and a bottle of pure Russian vodka, which they imbibe with equal regularity every day, without any of the rush of ardour to the head that is provoked by a strong dose, such as the young German artisan, that student

THE PORTRAIT

of Myeshtchansky Street, who has undisputed possession of the pavement after twelve o'clock at night, loves to give himself on Sundays.

"Life in Kolomna is never varied: rarely does a carriage rumble through its quiet streets, unless it be one full of actors, which disturbs the general stillness with its bells, its creaking and rattling. Here almost every one goes on foot. Only at rare intervals a cab crawls along lazily, almost always without a fare, taking a load of hay for its humble nag. The rent of the flats rarely amounts to a thousand roubles; they more often cost from fifteen to twenty or thirty roubles a month, not reckoning numbers of rooms that are divided up into corners, let with heating and coffee for four and a half roubles a month. The widows of government-clerks, in receipt of a pension, are the most substantial inhabitants of the quarter. They behave with great propriety, keep their room fairly clean, and talk to their female neighbours and friends of the dearness of beef, potatoes, and cabbages. They not infrequently have a young daughter, a silent creature who has nothing to say for herself, though sometimes rather nice-looking; they have also rather a nasty little dog and an old-fashioned clock with a dismally ticking pendulum. These widows of government-clerks occupy the best rooms at the rent of twenty to thirty, sometimes even forty roubles. Next to them in precedence come the actors, whose salaries don't allow of their leaving Kolomna. They are rather a free and easy set, like all artists, and live for their own pleasure. Sitting in their dressing-gowns, they either carve some trifle out of bone or clean a pistol or stick pieces of cardboard together to make something of

THE PORTRAIT

use in the house, or play draughts or cards with a friend, and so they spend their mornings; they follow the same pursuits in the evening, mingling them with punch. Below these swells, these aristocrats of Kolomna, come the smaller fry, and it is as hard for the observer to reckon up all the people occupying the different corners and nooks in one room as to enumerate all the creatures that breed in stale vinegar. What people does one not meet there! Old women who say their prayers, old women who get drunk, old women who both get drunk and say their prayers; old women who live from hand to mouth by means that pass all understanding, who like ants drag old rags and linen from Kalinkin bridge to the Tolkutchy market, to sell them there for fifteen kopecks,—in fact all the pitiful and luckless dregs of humanity.

“Naturally enough these people are often in great poverty, which prevents them from living even their ordinary poor life; they are often obliged to resort to borrowing to get out of their difficulties. Then persons turn up in their midst who are known by the high-sounding title of capitalists, who are able to provide sums from twenty to a hundred roubles, of course at various rates of interest, almost always exorbitant. Little by little, these persons amass a fortune, which sometimes allows them to take a little house of their own.

“But among these money-lenders there was one strange creature very different from the rest; his name was Petromihali. No one knew whether he was a Greek, an Armenian, or a Moldavian, but anyway his features were distinctly southern. He always went about in loose Asiatic attire, he was tall, his face was

THE PORTRAIT

of a dark olive hue, his grizzled eyebrows and moustache gave him rather a terrible appearance. No expression whatever could be detected on his face: it was almost always immobile, and his strongly marked southern features made him a striking contrast to the ashen-grey inhabitants of Kolomna. Petromihali was quite unlike the other money-lenders of this secluded quarter of Petersburg. He could lend any sum required of him; naturally the interest charged for it was also exceptional. His old house with a number of out-buildings was on the Kozoy Marsh. It would not have been so dilapidated if its owner had been prepared to incur some expense for repairs, but Petromihali would spend no money at all. All his rooms, with the exception of a little garret in which he lived himself, were cold storerooms, full of china, gilt and jasper vases, litter of all sorts, even furniture, which debtors of various grades and callings brought him as pledges, for Petromihali disdained nothing, and, although he lent by the hundred thousand, he was also prepared to oblige with a sum not exceeding a rouble. He was ready to put old linen, good-for-nothing broken chairs, even torn boots, into his storerooms, and a beggar could boldly apply to him with a bundle in his arms. Precious pearls, which had perhaps once encircled the fairest necks on earth, were shut up in his dirty iron chests, together with the old-fashioned snuff-box of the lady of fifty, with the diadem that had crowned the alabaster brow of a beauty, and the diamond ring of some poor government-clerk, the reward of his years of unflagging service. But it must be observed that only extremity of need drove people to apply to him. His terms were so severe that no one felt inclined to

THE PORTRAIT

face them. But what was most strange was that his rate of interest did not at first sight seem so high. By means of strange and extraordinary calculations, he managed in some inexplicable way that the sums due increased at a terrible rate, and even the officials whose duty it was to inspect his books could not discover how it was done, especially as it seemed to rest on strict mathematical principles; they saw the obvious augmentation of the total, and yet, at the same time, they saw that there was no mistake in the reckoning. His heart was no more affected by pity than by the other emotions that are felt by men, and no entreaty could move him to defer or lessen a payment. Several times luckless old women with faces blue with cold, limbs numb, and dead hands outstretched, as though even in death imploring mercy, were found frozen at his door. This aroused general indignation, and on several occasions the police would have investigated this strange man's doings, but the police constables always succeeded under some pretext or other in dissuading the police superintendent and in putting a different aspect on the matter, although they never received a farthing from Petromihali. But wealth has such a strange power, that people put faith in it as in a treasury note. It can, unnoticed, sway all men as though they were cringing slaves. This strange being sat cross-legged on a sofa blackened by age, and received his applicants without moving, merely twitching an eyebrow by way of greeting; and he was never heard to utter a superfluous word. There were rumours, however, that he sometimes gave money gratis, not asking for its return, but making such a demand that every one fled from him in horror, and even the most

THE PORTRAIT

talkative women could not bring their lips to repeat it. Those who had the temerity to accept the sums he gave turned yellow, pined away and died without daring to reveal the secret.

"An artist who was famous in those days for his really excellent work had a little house in the same quarter of the town. That artist was my father. I can show you some of his paintings, which reveal true talent. His life was most tranquil. He was one of those modest devout painters such as were only common in the religious middle ages. He might have enjoyed great celebrity and have made a great fortune, if he had accepted the vast number of commissions offered him on all hands; but he preferred to paint religious subjects, and undertook for a small sum to paint the whole ikonostasis of his parish church. It often happened that he was in want of money, but he could never bring himself to apply to the terrible money-lender, though he was always certain of being able to pay the debt later on, for he had only to sit down and paint a few portraits, for the money to be in his pocket. But he was so loth to tear himself away from his pursuits, it was so painful to be parted even for a time from his cherished work, that he preferred to sit hungry for days together in his room, and he would have done so always, but that he had a dearly loved wife and two children, one of whom you see before you now. On one occasion, however, his need was so acute that he had almost made up his mind to go to the Greek, when suddenly the news reached him that the terrible money-lender was on the point of death. This fact impressed him and he was disposed to see in it the intervention of providence to keep him from

carrying out his intention, when he met in his entry the old woman who waited upon the money-lender in the threefold character of cook, porter, and valet. The old woman, who in her strange master's service had quite got out of the habit of talking, gasped for breath as she muttered in a hollow voice a few jerky disconnected words, from which my father could learn nothing but that her master was in great need of him and begged him to bring his paints and brushes with him. My father could not imagine what use he could be to him at such a time, above all, with paints and brushes, but, moved by curiosity, he took his box of painting materials and set off with the old woman.

"He had much ado to make his way through the crowd of beggars, who were thronging about the abode of the dying money-lender in the hope that maybe at last on his deathbed the sinner might repent and distribute some small part of his enormous wealth. He went into a little room, and saw lying stretched almost the whole length of it the body of the Asiatic, which he took to be dead, so still and straight it lay. At last the withered head was raised, and the eyes were fastened upon him with such a terrible look that my father shuddered. Petromihali uttered a hollow exclamation, and at last articulated, 'Paint my portrait!' My father was amazed at this strange desire. He began to urge upon him that this was not the time to think of that, that he ought to lay aside all earthly desires, that he had not many minutes to live, and so he must think of his past deeds and lay his penitence before the Most High. 'I want nothing: paint my portrait!' Petromihali articulated in a firm voice, while his face worked in such convulsions that my father would cer-

THE PORTRAIT

tainly have gone away, had not the feeling, very pardonable in an artist impressed by an exceptional subject for his brush, kept him. The money-lender's face certainly was one of those which are a veritable treasure for an artist. With terror, and at the same time with a certain secret eagerness, he set the canvas for lack of an easel on his knee, and began painting. The idea of using the face afterwards for a picture, in which he wanted to depict the man possessed by devils at the moment when they are being driven out by the mighty word of the Saviour,—this thought made him redouble his efforts. He hurriedly put in the outline and the first shadows, dreading every minute that the money-lender's life would suddenly be cut short, for death seemed already hovering on his lips. Only from time to time he uttered a hoarse sound and in anxiety turned his terrible eyes towards the picture; at last, something almost like joy gleamed in his eye as he saw how his features were being put upon the canvas. Fearing every moment for his life, my father decided to concentrate his efforts on finishing the eyes completely. They were a most difficult subject, because the feeling expressed in them was extraordinary and impossible to reproduce. He was busy over them for about an hour, and at last succeeded in perfectly catching the fire which was already dimmed in the original. With secret satisfaction he moved a little away from the picture to get a better view of it, and leapt back in horror; he saw living eyes looking at him. He was overcome with such unutterable terror, that flinging down the palette and the brushes he was rushing towards the door; but the horrible half-dead body of the money-lender rose in the bed and, clutching at

THE PORTRAIT

him with a skinny hand, bade him go on with his work. My father made the sign of the cross and vowed that he would not go on. Then the awful being rolled off his bed so that his bones rattled, and, making a supreme effort, his eyes glittering with eagerness and his hands clutching my father's legs and crawling on the ground, he kissed the skirts of his coat, while he besought him to finish the portrait. But my father was not to be moved, and could only marvel at the strength of the man's will which could even overcome the approach of death. At last Petromihali in desperation, with a tremendous effort, moved from under the bed a trunk, and an immense heap of gold fell with a thud at my father's feet. Seeing that even by this he was unmoved, he grovelled at his feet and a perfect stream of entreaties flowed from his hitherto silent lips. It was impossible not to feel a sort of awful and even, if I may so express it, revolting compassion. 'Good man! Man of God! Man of Christ!' this living skeleton articulated in despair. 'I supplicate you in the name of your little children, your noble wife, your father's coffin, finish my portrait! One hour, only one hour more, work at it! Listen! I will reveal a secret to you . . .' At this the deathly pallor that overspread his features was more marked. 'But do not betray that secret to any one, neither to your wife nor to your children, or else—you will die, and they will die, and you will be all unhappy. Listen, if you have not pity on me now I will beg you no more. After my death I must go to Him, to whom I am loth to go; there I must endure tortures of which you have never dreamed; but I need not go to Him so long as our earth stands, if only you finish my portrait. I

THE PORTRAIT

have learned that half my life will pass into my portrait, if only it is painted by a skilful artist. You see that part of my life has gone into the eyes already; it will be in all the features when you have finished. And though my body will rot, half of life will remain on earth and for long ages I shall escape from torment. Finish it! Finish it! Finish it! . . .' this strange creature shrieked in a heart-rending and dying voice. My father was still more overcome by horror. He felt the hair rise up on his head at this awful secret. He dropped the brush which, moved by his prayers, he had again picked up. 'Ah, so you won't finish my portrait!' articulated Petromihali in a hoarse voice. 'Then take my portrait home with you: I make you a present of it.' At these words something not unlike a horrid laugh came from his lips; life seemed to flicker up once more in his face, and a minute later a livid corpse lay on the floor. My father did not like to touch the paints and brushes that had portrayed those godless features; he ran out of the room.

"To distract his mind from the unpleasant impression left by this adventure, he spent some hours walking about the town, and only returned home in the evening. The first thing that met his eye in his studio was the portrait he had painted of the money-lender. He appealed to his wife, to the woman who did the cooking, and then to the house-porter, but all declared positively that no one had brought the portrait or had even come to the house in his absence. This made him pause. He approached the portrait and involuntarily turned his eyes away, overpowered with repulsion for his own work. He gave orders for it to be removed to

THE PORTRAIT

the attic, but for all that was aware of a strange oppression, the presence of thoughts at which he was himself alarmed. But he was still more impressed by the following almost incredible incident after he had gone to bed: he distinctly saw Petromihali come into his room and stand before his bed. For a long while he stared at him with his living eyes. At last he began making such hideous suggestions to him, wished to give such a fiendish direction to his art, that my father in a cold sweat of terror leapt from the bed with a moan of pain, his soul weighed down under a load of oppression, though he at the same time was moved to fiery indignation. He saw that the marvellous figure of the dead Petromihali had stepped out of the frame of the portrait, which was again hanging upon the wall. He made up his mind to burn his accursed handiwork that very day. As soon as the fire was lighted he threw it in the flames, and with secret gratification saw the snapping of the frame on which the canvas was stretched, the hissing of the still wet paint; at last only a heap of ashes was left. And as in light dust it began to fly up the chimney, it seemed as though the dim figure of Petromihali flew away with them. He was conscious of a certain relief. Feeling as though he had recovered from a long illness, he turned towards the corner of the room where he had hung the ikon he had painted, in order to pour out his heartfelt contrition—to his horror he saw there the portrait of Petromihali, the eyes of which looked more full of life than ever, so much so that even the children uttered a shriek as they looked at it. This made a great impression on my father. He resolved to reveal the whole secret to the priest of our parish, and to ask his advice how to

THE PORTRAIT

act in this extraordinary predicament. The priest was a man of judgment and, moreover, warmly devoted to his duties. At the first summons he came at once to my father, whom he respected as an estimable parishioner. My father did not even think it necessary to take him aside, but ventured at once in the presence of my mother and us two children to tell him of this incredible event. But he had hardly pronounced the first words when my mother uttered a hollow shriek and fell senseless on the floor. Her face was overcast with a fearful pallor, her lips remained motionless, parted, and all her features were distorted by convulsions. My father and the priest ran up to her, and saw to their consternation that she had accidentally swallowed a dozen needles which she happened to be holding between her lips. The doctor who came pronounced that the case was hopeless: some of the needles had stuck in her throat, others had passed into her stomach and other internal organs, and my mother died a terrible death.

"This incident had a powerful influence on my father's life. From that time his soul was possessed by gloom, he rarely occupied himself with anything. Almost always he sat plunged in silence, and avoided all society. But meanwhile the awful image of Petromihali with his living eyes began to pursue him persistently, and at times my father was aware of a torrent of desperate, savage ideas, at which he could not help shuddering himself. All that lies hidden like a black sediment in the depths of a man's soul and that is eradicated and dispelled by education, by generous deeds and the imitation of what is good, he constantly felt stirring within him and striving to find an outlet

THE PORTRAIT

and to develop to the full stature of its wickedness. The gloomy state of his soul disposed him to clutch at this black side of man. But I ought to observe that the strength of my father's character was exceptional: the control he had over himself and his passions was incredible, his convictions were stronger than granite, and the stronger the temptation the more he strove to contend against it with all the indomitable strength of his soul. At last, worn out by this struggle, he made up his mind to lay bare his whole soul in an avowal of all his sufferings to the same priest, who had almost always brought him healing with his wise words. This happened at the beginning of autumn; it was a lovely day; the sun was shining with a fresh autumn radiance, the windows of our rooms were wide-open, my father was sitting with the worthy priest in his studio, my brother and I were playing in the room adjoining it. The rooms were on the second storey of our little house. The door of the studio stood a little way open; I chanced to look through the opening; I saw that my father had moved closer to the priest, and even heard him say, 'At last I will reveal the whole mystery . . .' All at once a momentary scream made me turn round, my brother had vanished. I went to the window and—my God! I never can forget that moment: my brother's dead body was lying in a pool of blood on the pavement. Probably in playing he had incautiously overbalanced and fallen from the window, no doubt, head foremost, for the skull was dashed to pieces. I shall never forget that awful accident. My father stood motionless before the window with his arms folded and his eyes raised to heaven. The priest was horror-stricken, recalling the terrible death of my

THE PORTRAIT

mother, and urged upon my father that he should keep the awful secret to himself.

"After this my father sent me to the military school where I spent all my school years, while he himself retired to a monastery in a little remote town, surrounded by desolate country, in the midst of the wild and barren scenery of the poverty-stricken north, and there solemnly took the vows of a monk. He performed all the hard duties of this vocation with such submissiveness and humility, he took all the hardships of his life with such meekness combined with enthusiastic and ardent faith, that it seemed as though nothing sinful had power to touch him, but still the terrible picture with its living eyes which he himself had painted pursued him even to this almost tomb-like solitude. The Father Superior, learning of my father's exceptional talent as a painter, commissioned him to decorate the church with several figures. You should have seen with what lofty religious meekness he toiled at his work: with strict fasting and prayer, with profound meditation and solitude of soul, he prepared himself for his great task. He spent the nights without rest at his sacred work, and perhaps that is how it is that you would rarely find a work even of the great masters bearing the imprint of such truly Christian thought and spirit. There was such heavenly serenity in his saints, such heartfelt contrition in his penitents, as I have rarely met even in pictures of celebrated artists. At last all his thoughts and desires were bent on painting the Mother of God mildly stretching out her hands over the praying people. At this work he toiled with such devotion, and with such complete forgetfulness of himself and all the world, that some little of

THE PORTRAIT

the peace which he had shed over the features of the divine Protectress of all the world seemed to have passed into his own soul. Anyway the horrible figure of the money-lender ceased to haunt him, and the portrait disappeared no one knew where.

"Meanwhile my education at the military school was over. I received the commission of an officer, but to my great regret circumstances prevented my seeing my father. We were sent off to the army fighting the Turks abroad. I will not weary you by describing the life I led in the midst of marches, bivouacs, and hot skirmishes, it is sufficient to say that hardship, danger, and the hot climate transformed me so completely that those who had known me before would not have recognised me. My sunburnt face, immense moustache, and loud husky voice gave me quite a different aspect. I was a merry fellow, took no thought of the morrow, liked to uncork an extra bottle with a comrade, to chatter nonsense with attractive little hussies, and to play all sorts of silly pranks—in short I was a careless soldier. However, as soon as the campaign was over, I thought it my first duty to visit my father.

"When I reached the solitary monastery, I was overcome by a strange feeling which I had never known before. I felt that I still had ties with another being, that there was something incomplete in my position. The solitary monastery in the midst of barren poverty-stricken scenery unconsciously induced a poetic mood and gave a strange vagueness to my thoughts, such as we commonly feel in the depths of autumn when the leaves are rustling under our feet, the black leafless twigs form a scanty network over our heads, the ravens caw in the distant heights, and unconsciously we

THE PORTRAIT

quicken our pace as though trying to collect our straying thoughts. Many wooden outbuildings, blackened by age, surrounded the brick building. I went into the long mossy cloisters that ran round the cells and asked a monk for Father Grigory. This was the name my father had taken when he entered the monastery. His cell was pointed out to me.

"I shall never forget the impression he made on me. I saw an old man on whose pale wan face it seemed not one trace, not one thought of earth existed. His eyes, accustomed to be fixed upon heaven, had acquired that passionless look, full of the light of the other world, that look which only in moments of inspiration illumines the artist's face. He sat before me like a saint, looking out from the canvas, upon which an artist's hand has depicted him for the people to pray to; he seemed not to notice me at all, though his eyes were turned in the direction from which I came towards him. I did not want to make myself known to him yet, and so merely asked his blessing as though I were a travelling pilgrim; but what was my surprise when he brought out, 'Welcome, son Leon!' This astounded me. It was ten years since I had parted from him, and yet people did not recognise me who had seen me much later. 'I knew that you would come to me,' he went on. 'I asked the Holy Virgin and the holy saints about it, and I have been expecting you from hour to hour because I feel my end is near and I want to reveal to you an important secret. Come with me, my son, and, first of all, let us pray!' We went into the church, and he led me up to the picture representing the Mother of God blessing the people. I was struck by the profound expression of divinity in her face.

THE PORTRAIT

For a long time he lay prostrate before the picture, and at last after long prayer and meditation he came out with me.

“Then my father told me all that you have just heard from me. I believed in the truth of it because I have myself been the witness of the terrible incidents of our life.

“ ‘Now I will tell you, my son,’ he added, when he had finished the story, ‘I will tell you what was revealed to me by a saint seen by me, though unrecognised among a large number of people save by me, to whom the merciful Creator vouchsafed such an unspeakable blessing.’ Meanwhile my father clasped his hands and turned his eyes towards heaven, his whole being absorbed in it, and at last I heard what I am about to tell you to-day. You must not be surprised at the strangeness of his story: I saw that he was in the condition of a man when he endures insufferable misfortune; when trying to rally all his strength, all the iron strength of his soul and not finding it strong enough, he turns wholly to religion; and the heavier the burden of his calamities, the more ardent is his meditation and his prayer. He is no longer like the gentle contemplative hermit who takes refuge in his monastery as in a longed-for haven, that he may find repose from life and with Christian meekness pray to Him to whom he grows ever nearer and nearer; on the contrary he becomes something titanic. The flame of his soul is not extinct, but on the contrary it burns and breaks out with even greater fierceness. Then he is all transformed to religious fire, his brain is always full of marvellous dreams. At every turn he sees visions and hears voices from heaven; his thoughts glow like fire;

THE PORTRAIT

his eyes see nothing pertaining to earth; all his movements are filled with enthusiasm, the result of continual concentration on one thing. It was the first time I had noticed this condition in him, and I mention it that you may not think the words I heard from him too strange. 'My son,' he said to me after a long almost rigid gaze upwards at the sky, 'soon, soon that time is approaching when the tempter of the human race, the Antichrist, will be born into the world. Terrible will be that time, it will be before the end of the world. He will gallop about on a mighty horse, and terrible will be the sufferings endured by those who remain true to Christ. Listen, my son. For long years the Antichrist has craved to be born, but cannot be, because he must be born in a supernatural way; and everything in the world is ordained by the Almighty, so that everything is done in its natural order, and so no powers will help him, my son, to break into the world. But our earth is as dust before the Creator. It must dissolve into ruin in accordance with His laws and every day the laws of nature will become weaker, and therefore the boundary line between the natural and the supernatural will be easier to overstep. Even now he is being born already, but only some parts of him can force their way into the world. He is choosing man himself for his dwelling-place, and appearing in those people whose angel seems to have abandoned them at their very birth and who are branded with terrible hatred towards men and everything that is the work of the Creator. Such was that marvellous money-lender whom I, accursed as I was, dared to depict with my sinful brush. It was he, my son, it was Antichrist. If my sinful hand had not

THE PORTRAIT

audaciously portrayed him, he would have withdrawn and vanished, because he cannot live longer than the body in which he has confined himself. In those loathsome living eyes the devilish feeling persisted. Marvel, my son, at the terrible power of the devil. He strives to make his way into everything; into our deeds, into our thoughts, and even into the inspiration of the artist. Innumerable will be the victims of that hellish spirit that lives unseen without form on earth. It is that same black spirit which forces itself upon us even in moments of the purest and holiest meditation. Ah, if my brush had not abandoned its hellish work, he would have done us even more evil, and there is no human power to resist him, for he is choosing that time when the greatest calamities are coming upon us. Woe to poor humanity, my son! But listen to what the Mother of God herself revealed to me in an hour of holy vision. When I was working at the most pure face of the Holy Virgin, when I shed tears of penitence over my past life and spent long hours in prayer and fasting that I might be more worthy to paint her divine features, I was visited, my son, by inspiration. I felt that a higher force had descended upon me from on high and an angel was guiding my sinful hand—I felt that the hair stood up upon my head and all my soul was in a tremor. Oh, my son! for that moment I would take a thousand tortures on myself. And I marvel myself at what my brush portrayed. Then the holy form of the Virgin appeared to me in a dream, and I learned that, in reward for my toils and my prayers, the supernatural existence of that demon in the portrait would not be

THE PORTRAIT

eternal, that, if some one shall solemnly tell its story when fifty years had passed, at the time of the new moon, its force will be extinguished and will be scattered like dust, and I learned that I might tell you this before my death. Thirty years have passed; there are twenty to come. Let us pray, my son!' Hereupon he knelt down and was lost in prayer. I confess I inwardly ascribed all he said to his overheated imagination, wrought upon by unceasing prayer and fasting, yet from respect I did not want to make any observation or objection. But when I saw how he raised his withered arms to heaven, with what deep penitence he knelt, silent, dead to all around him, with what inexpressible ardour he prayed for those who had not the strength to resist the hellish Temptor and so brought all that was lofty in their souls to ruin, with what passionate self-abasement he prostrated himself, while the speaking tears flowed down his cheeks, and all his features worked in mute anguish,—oh! then I had not the strength to give myself up to cold reflection and to analyse his words!

"Several years have passed since his death. I did not believe the story, and indeed thought little of it; but I never could bring myself to tell it to any one. I don't know why it was, but I was always conscious of something that held me back. To-day I walked into the auction-room with no motive in my mind, and for the first time have told the story of that marvellous portrait, so that I cannot help beginning to wonder whether to-day is not the new moon of which my father spoke to me, for it actually is just twenty years since then."

THE PORTRAIT

Here the narrator stopped, and the listeners, who had been following him with rapt attention, unconsciously turned their eyes to the strange portrait and noticed to their surprise that the eyes no longer preserved that strange life-like look which had so impressed them at first. Their wonder was even greater when the features of the strange picture began almost imperceptibly to vanish, as a breath vanishes from the surface of clear steel! Something cloudy remained upon the canvas. And, when they went close up to it, they saw an insignificant landscape, so that, as they walked away, they wondered whether they had really seen the mysterious portrait, or whether it was a dream and had been a momentary illusion of eyes exhausted by prolonged scrutiny of old pictures.

THE END



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